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63rd year of publication

Iceland's journey from global investment to local products

Bert Wivoet

Amidst all the news of economic downturns and stock market losses all over the world, not much has been said or written about the country of Iceland. That's probably because this sizable volcanic island (total area of 103,000 km²) in the North Atlantic is inhabited by only 300,000 people. Talking about Iceland's economy is like talking about the economy of a mid-sized city like Halifax.

Yet the economic decline of Iceland is instructive, to say the least.

In an article entitled "Inflation Will Pay," Novelist and playwright Kristof Magnusson, who hails from Iceland, describes how a proud, fiercely independent and energetic population fell into the trap of credit-based consumerism and is now paying the price.

He says that Iceland's problem is dilettantism – playing around in a superficial way. People went on a wild spree of becoming "modern" by buying flat-screen TVs, home cinemas, designer kitchens and large modern homes. He tells of how his own father advised him to take out a loan and buy a house. "Inflation will pay for it," his father told him.

No savings

Inflation was, indeed, a common economic reality in Iceland. Whenever prices of commodities rise sharply over the years, a sizable loan tends to decrease in value. Thus an inflation-oriented economy invites people to spend freely today on items they may be able to afford tomorrow, unless, of course, the credit crunch prematurely pulls tomorrow into today.

"Inflation makes a mockery of saving," writes Magnusson. "Everyone tried to spend their money as quickly as possible and did what every Icelander did, which was to accumulate as much debt as possible."

The government, which did not oversee the actions of the banks sufficiently (sounds familiar, Mr. Alan Greenspan?), was asleep on the switch when banks were allowing first-time buyers of houses to get loans of up to 90 percent of the cost price.

A friend of Mr. Magnusson boasted in 1991 that Icelanders had more cars per capita than Americans.

Overly optimistic

But the excessive optimism was not limited to individual consumers. Iceland Air bought nearly 10 percent of Easyjet. Icelandic bank Kaupthing took over the Danish FIH Bank. The traditional Danish hotel Copenhagen's D'Angleterre passed into Icelandic hands. Icelandic investors announced that their assets had far surpassed the Gross Domestic Product of their country. The Associated Press talked about "an outsized banking sector that set out with Viking confidence to conquer swaths of the British economy – from fashion retailers to top soccer teams.

"Unemployment was as rare as pessimism," writes Magnusson. "Ever more tourists were pouring in and, thanks to the music of Bjork and Sigur Ros, the island had become cool…. It looked as if good times were here to stay."

Arrival of tomorrow

But they didn't. Just as American consumers and banks woke up one morning to find that their borrowing and lending practices were built on false dreams, so Icelanders found themselves buried in debt. Towards the end of September the state took over the Glitnir Bank. Then the Landesbanki was nationalized, followed by Kaupthing. Then the Prime Ministers started talking about impending state bankruptcy. Icelanders "are watching helplessly as their economy implodes – their currency losing almost half its value, and their heavily exposed banks collapsing under the weight of debts incurred by lending in the boom times," reported the Associated Press.

Predictably, British Prime Minister Brown was upset and froze Icelandic assets in Britain.

Britons stood to lose millions because of Iceland's irresponsible expansion.

And so Iceland was the first Western nation to approach the International Monetary Fund.

The *Herald tribune* quoted Arsaell Valfells, a professor at the University of Iceland, as saying: "Iceland is bankrupt. The Icelandic krona is history. The IMF has to come and rescue us."

Faint hope clause

One does hear good stories coming from the churches, however. Pastors are urging their flocks to return to a more modest and community-oriented tradition. They point to the riches of a spiritual heritage.

According to Kristoff Magnusson, "Icelanders can "still fall back on the two great Icelandic national virtues: energy and optimism. And why not? The Icelanders have the best fish in the world and the cleanest energy, and somehow this should be able to stretch for 300,000 people. Perhaps if they get rid of a few cars."

He believes there is a future for Icelanders as they move from global players in investment banking to local products like shellfish, lamb and potatoes.

How many hairs on a white-tailed deer?

Bert Witvoet

SMITHERS, B.C. – Columnist Curt Gesch writes about "Counting" in this issue of *C.C.* (See page 12). Much of his article is about counting wheat seeds and about the fact that human beings are the only creatures who are able to count and who like to count. But he starts out by talking about counting the hairs of a white-tailed deer.

"Did you know," he writes, "that there are 2,664 hairs per square inch on a white-tailed deer's winter coat? Or that in the summer there are 5,176 hairs per square inch? (That's right: *more* than in winter.)"

If Curt is right, it means that a white-tailed deer has almost twice as many hairs in the summer as in the winter. This came as a surprise to me. So I asked Curt to give us an explanation why that is. I would have thought that God realizes that winters are cold and that deer need more hair when the temperature dips to -20 Celsius!

Late-night activity

Apparently, Curt got his information from the author of *The*

See Deer *on page 6*

Labour

Mackenzie King: the "founding father" of Canada's department of labour

Bert den Boggende

A few years ago I submitted to a Canadian journal an essay about Mackenzie King's developing religious ideas between 1893 and 1901. Some of these ideas were developed in the context of Toronto's working poor. In that connection I made a few comments about the social gospel, more in anticipation of a future essay I wanted to write than a logical conclusion. The journals' two essay assessors rightfully took me to task, one of them suggesting, without explanation, that the term social gospel should be deleted altogether.

That suggestion may not be feasible, since the term has become entrenched in scholarship, and will probably not be appreciated by one of my esteemed professors at McMaster University, Dr. Richard Allen, who has written extensively about the social gospel. But I could think of one good reason why the term might be deleted: it smacks of unbiblical dualism.

Until recently most authors, including Harry Antonides, have followed Richard Allen's seminal work on social gospel, a work which emphasizes a Methodist and German-American theology. However, King, a Presbyterian, was influenced by British theology, although that theology played second fiddle to his practical encounters. Before looking at these encounters let me first give you a few salient details of King's early life.

Developing interest in labour

William Lyon Mackenzie King was born on December 17, 1874, in Berlin, Ontario (now Kitchener). He began his undergraduate studies in 1891 at the University of Toronto, graduating four years later. At the encouragement of his lawyer father he decided to read law, while he supported himself as a reporter. For the newspapers he reported on sermons, the courts – his first real insight into the lives of the poor – and some labour-related events. Disliking law, he decided to pursue his labour interests at the University of Chicago, writing a thesis on the International Typographical Union. Back in Toronto in the summer of 1897, he researched its sweatshops and the living conditions of labourers, the results of which he gave to federal minister and family friend William Mulock.

In the fall of that year, Mackenzie King enrolled at Harvard University, after which he left for Europe in 1899 to do doctoral research on labour issues. While vacationing in Rome in June1900, he unexpectedly received a telegram from Mulock inviting him to become the editor of the new *Labour Gazette*, the beginning of Canada's labour department. In fact, for a few months he was the whole labour department, functioning as its deputy minister, which he became officially somewhat later. In that capacity he travelled the country for the Royal Commission on Industrial Disputes and attempted to settle such disputes. In 1908 he

became an MP and minister of labour but was defeated in the federal election of 1911.

Between that year and 1919, when he was chosen liberal party leader, he spent his time mainly in the United States, working on labour-management reconciliation for the Rockefeller Foundation. In 1918 he published his lengthy book *Industry and Humanity*, a work that included his Christian views of labour.

Slow awakening to problems

Industrialism and immigration developed slowly in Canada and excesses in working conditions became apparent only later in the 19th century. As had been made evident in the religious revivals of the 18th and 19th century, the churches suffered from theological formalism. That formalism also pervaded the churches' views about the poor. As a result, churches reacted hesitantly to the emerging labour problems. In Britain, where industrialism had started in the 18th century, the excesses were already very obvious and some churchmen had begun to voice their concern, among them the Anglican Seventh Earl of Shaftesbury, sometimes called Mr. Evangelical, and Rev. J.F.D. Maurice, a liberal Anglican. While the former tried to get child labour laws enacted, the latter started cooperatives as a practical manifestation of his Christian socialism. Malcolm Sparkes, a British Quaker, referred to these cooperatives in his guild socialism scheme, a scheme that played a significant role in King's book.

Not until the 1870s did some Canadian congregations begin to show their concern and do something for the growing number of impoverished people. Not surprisingly, rapidly-growing Toronto soon began exper-iencing problems, and the first Presbyterian congregation to react was St. Andrew's in 1870. Its outreach was an expression of active Christian charity. A few years later Rev. Macdonnell, a strong proponent of this active outreach, became its minister. His sermons had a great impact on King in the 1890s. By this time there were other Presbyterians showing interest in the plight of the poor, among them Sir Oliver Mowat, Ontario's premier in the 1880s, who introduced such labour legislation as minimum ages for employment and maximum hours of work. J.J. Kelso launched a child welfare crusade, one of Ontario's more successful purity movements, while prison warden James Massie led the movement for prison reform. King was involved in both. King's outreach also included the YMCA, the rescue of prostitutes (a work the Salvation Army also was, and still is, involved), and visiting hospitalized children on Sundays.

Work for the poor

As British historian D.W. Bebbington has pointed out, one of the characteristics of 19th century evangelicals was action. King's activity happened to be in the socio-economic sphere, encouraged theologically by Rev. Macdonnell, practically by Kelso and Massie, and academically by a number of professors and his readings. He based himself, as he wrote in his diary, on Jesus, who had "great sympathy for the poor, the outcast, the fallen and despised." He regarded this outreach as his Christian ministry, work "fit for the Master's observance." While in Chicago, he wrote in his diary, "I felt that my work would be or must be for the poor. In fact I only want to live for my fellow man and the problem now is just how I can serve them best." In his sermon "In as much as ye have done it" in the Churchill Presbyterian Church – he filled in for a vacationing minister – he stated that Christian service "consists of *doing little things* for those *less fortunate* than ourselves." For the farmers attending this service it meant "to take little children from crowded centres to their farms for the summer months." However, many Christians, including many leading Presbyterians, showed no such concern. In fact, several prominent industrialists were opposed to any form of government interference. When King researched the workers' plight in the late 1890s some of the worst situations were in establishments of these Presbyterians.

Through his studies, his newspaper work, and his reform activities he became receptive to socialistic ideas. He spoke sometimes at socialist gatherings, usually including a religious note, believing that the workers were "willing to follow Christ if only Christ can be seen by them as he was." In Chicago King heard Washington Gladden, the Congregationalist author of *O Master, Let Me Walk with Thee*, speak on "True Socialism," about which he noted that it was not much different from Christ's teachings. At Harvard, however, he began making a distinction between "true socialism" and the "socialist schemes of American socialists." In 1900 he stated in his diary that he "was less and less a Socialist, in matters of Government extension." The solution was not socialism but the Christian message that changed the human heart and motives. He began favoring conservative rather than radical reform, stressing that individuals should work together to implement solutions, as was done in cooperatives, which looked "at both the capitalist and the workers' sides and consider larger human problems."

King's Christian views

I doubt that many Liberal Party members had read King's *Industry and Humanity* before he became party leader; if they had, they might not have elected him as their future prime minister. The book has generally received negative criticism. His official biographer called the book pedantic and saturated with moralistic preaching. Two very negative biographers held that King had cynical motives to cultivate political support of religious groups. Socialist critics have complained that, as prime minister, King failed to implement some of the socialist tenets and wished that he had deleted his superfluous Christian ramblings. Others lauded these Christian references as King's proclamation of the social gospel. One commentator regarded the book as a plea for action in millennialist forms.

A few quotes should suffice to give an idea of King's Christian perspective. "Spiritual perceptions precede an understanding of social and economic problems." "It is in the image of God himself, not after the pattern of some industrial model, that all men, from the humblest to the greatest, have been created." "Industry and Nationality exist for the sake of Humanity, not Humanity for the sake of Industry and Nationality." (compare Jesus' comment about the Sabbath). King held that Micah 6:8 was the foundation for the principles underlying peace. Justice and mercy were the essence of the divine order, which sustained humankind and instilled a consciousness of harmony. He used Matthew 18:15-17 as a modeling guideline. Verse 15 contained the method of conciliation and mediation; verse 16 the method of investigation and arbitration, and verse 17 the method of reliance upon an informed public opinion.

Guild socialism

King was the first major political figure in Canada to examine the new emerging society. In the process he rejected classical liberal economics. What critics have failed to grasp is that King's reconstruction of post-war society relied at times heavily on a lengthy pamphlet written by Malcolm Sparkes. Early in the book King acknowledged Sparkes' work in a footnote, and later elaborated upon it. King's own Canadian version of Christian guild socialism is slightly different from that of Sparkes.

Since the late 18th century authors and politicians had shown interest in things medieval. For example, chivalry as a role model for men came in vogue and 15th-century Flemish painters were rediscovered. It is in that context of renewed medieval interest that at the beginning of the 20th century a number of books and pamphlets were written dealing with guilds for the new

Politics

The "blessings" of empire? Part 2

Principalities & Powers
David T. Koyzis

Because we have come to see empire in almost wholly negative terms, we may have difficulty recalling a time when empire – and a Christian empire at that – was considered nearly an unmitigated good. Both Byzantine rulers and the heirs of Charlemagne in the west were rivals for the imperial title, which had its origins in ancient Rome. When Rome fell in 476, many of its subjects greatly regretted this event, because it spelled the end of an orderly rule of law over the Mediterranean basin and the dawn of a much more precarious political existence.

For all its faults, which were considerable, the Roman Empire provided stability for hundreds of years by keeping the peace throughout its far-flung territory. Indeed its laws, as codified by the eastern emperor Justinian in the 6th century, provided the basis for the legal systems of continental Europe and elsewhere.

When the apostle Paul and his companions were imprisoned in Macedonia, he would reveal their Roman citizenship to demonstrate that they had been illegally scourged by the civil magistrates (Acts 16:37-40). Later Paul would take the opportunity of his capture by the local authorities in Jerusalem to appeal to Caesar, which he had the right to do.

God-appointed rulers

To the church in Rome Paul wrote that Christians are to be "subject to the governing authorities," which "have been instituted by God" (Romans 13:1). Similarly, Peter instructed his readers to obey the political authorities and to honour the emperor (I Peter 2:13-17). Both understood that political authority has a crucial and God-given function to play in human life and that, even when it goes wrong or miscarries justice in particular circumstances, it nevertheless continues in large measure to maintain public justice.

Whether this authority takes the form of the early Israelite tribal judges, or the later Davidic monarchy, or an emperor ruling over a large land mass, God has called it "to punish those who do wrong and to praise those who do right." Believers are similarly called to obedience, though not uncritically. Just as the apostles obeyed God above mere human authorities (Acts 4:19; 5:29), so should we be wary of the overreaching claims of all institutions, including the state.

The lesser of

Is America an empire? I would give a qualified yes to this question. As the world's most powerful state, it makes decisions that affect countless people around the globe, including Canadians. Yet this is not the whole story. Just over two centuries ago Americans originated, as a deliberate alternative to the unitary imperial state, the federal system with its constitutional division of powers. This arrangement has worked so well that it has been copied by others, including Canada, Australia and India.

Even when the United States is at less than its best, Canadians should prefer living next to it over being adjacent to, say, Russia, which is renewing its old habit of bullying its neighbours, whether militarily or by withholding its natural resources. We are often in the habit of complaining about US actions at home and abroad. But the fact is that we do so with nearly complete impunity. We can easily get away with it, unlike Georgia *vis-à-vis* Russia. No matter how much the American government may be annoyed with us, we know that its troops will not be spilling over our borders any time soon. For this we can rightly be thankful.

Although an empire is tempted to abuse its considerable power, the fact of one nation exercising more influence than another is not itself a violation of justice. Nevertheless, other nations are well advised to be vigilant in their dealings with it, to ensure that its power is adequately checked.

David T. Koyzis (dkoyzis@redeemer.ca) teaches political science at Redeemer University College, Ancaster, Ontario, where he is beginning his 22nd year on the faculty.

century. During World War I Malcolm Sparkes developed his own version of guild socialism for the building trade, calling it the Industrial Parliament Scheme. It had some success, although his underlying Christian ideals were not mentioned in its final form. After the war the British government reneged on its promises and caused Sparkes' scheme to fail. And with it his name was forgotten.

For people reading King's book a reference to Sparkes often doesn't mean anything. I first happened to come across his name in 1983 while researching my dissertation, and in 2001 published an article about Sparkes. What makes guild socialism different from what is usually understood as socialism is the peculiar role of government. For Sparkes there were three components: labour, management and the community. Those three always needed to work together. The government was part of the community and through the community could participate in labour-management relations. That the community was included in labour-management relations was due to the fact that both had organic ties with the community. Decisions taken by labour and management always had repercussions for the community. For Sparkes all three needed to cooperate together in order to create viable, livable communities in which people experienced dignity.

A role for government

It is this triangular relationship that is the key to King's own version. He had felt it his Christian calling to serve the people. In his capacity as deputy labour minister he had been involved in industrial reconciliation, at times quite successfully. Through his involvement he had come to the conclusion that the government had some role to play in this area, a conclusion definitely not shared by all Liberals. While in the United States he again used his skills at reconciliation. Such reconciliation was possible, he believed, because labour and capital had common rather than opposed interests. Sparkes' ideals and suggestions thus made a lot of sense to him.

According to King, labour and capital were a community problem. The community provided the resources and powers to solve the problem; hence, it should be included when problems arose between labour, capital and management. Unlike Sparkes, King included capital as a role player. The role of government was included in the community and could be regarded as representative of the people as a whole. In effect the government's role is rather minor. No wonder that socialist critics complained. What King hoped for was a democratic industrial system, with the profits fairly divided between capitalist, manager, worker and consumer.

He also could imagine workers' control in conjunction with a democratic state, but it could never be forced. King disliked force. As he stated in his book, "Fear puts its reliance on Force; Faith its reliance on Consent." As one critic noted, King failed to grasp the true nature of corporate power and that he had more faith in goodwill than was warranted. There is some truth to that criticism, but King believed that we are our brother's keeper and that humankind is a brotherhood. From that perspective King's methods and ideals make a lot of sense. His suggestions certainly gave the workers dignity.

King's book was a contribution to post-war reconstruction and could be regarded as dated and not relevant to our present circumstances. There are certainly flaws in his book. Its theology was not profound, but for King personal piety and social outreach were inextricably intertwined. Unlike many socialists King held that labour and management were not antagonistic, a view shared by Abraham Kuyper and the Christian Labour Association of Canada. Like Kuyper, he argued for an organic relationship. It seems to me that, in the light of recent economic problems and seen from a Christian perspective, his fourfold interaction certainly deserves attention, even if the term guild socialism causes some unease.

Note: There are several editions of King's *Industry and Humanity*; I have used a 1973 reprint of the 1918 edition. King's diaries, which he started in 1893 and continued until the end of his life, can be found on http// king.collectionscanada.ca/EN/Default.asp. For Sparkes, see my "Pacifism and British Labor Relations: Malcolm Sparkes's Industrial Parliament Scheme," *Fides et Historia*, 33:1 (Winter/ Spring 2001): 89-108.

Dr. Bert den Boggende is a supply teacher who lives in Brooks, Alberta. He intends to write a few more articles on what certain leaders have said or written about labour-related issues.

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Guest editorial

City planning and the urban neighbourhood

David T. Koyzis

Next year marks the hundredth anniversary of the publication of Daniel Burnham's *Plan of Chicago*, a groundbreaking attempt at urban planning whose influence has been experienced by generations of city dwellers in North America and elsewhere.

Although I am not quite a native of Chicago, I was born just outside the city limits in Oak Park (one-time home of architect Frank Lloyd Wright and birthplace of Ernest Hemingway) and grew up in suburban Wheaton, about 40 km west of the "Loop," the city centre closely hemmed in by a rectangular network of elevated railway lines. I've not lived in the vicinity for decades now, but "Chicagoland," as it is known to its residents, still holds a place in my heart, especially the city itself, with its unique neighbourhoods, lakefront parks, architecture, world class museums, railways, and even the perpetually disappointing Chicago Cubs baseball team.

In the space of barely two generations Chicago grew from a small village on the southwest shores of Lake Michigan in the 1830s to a huge metropolis of more than a million people by the 1890s. With such explosive growth the city put down few roots and commanded little loyalty from its residents, the vast majority of whom had come from elsewhere in the US and, increasingly, from Europe. It was merely a place to hang one's hat, make one's fortune and then move on. Chicago grew in chaotic and haphazard fashion with little, if any, attention to the provision of basic urban amenities that might have a civilizing and humanizing effect on its people.

Aesthetic improvements

This began to change towards the end of the 19th century, starting with the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition, the great world's fair planned by Chicago architect Burnham. Thereafter Burnham and the Commercial Club of Chicago came to recognize the need for a comprehensive plan for developing and improving the entire urban environment for the sake of its people.

The *Plan of Chicago*, often called the Burnham Plan after its principal author, was published in 1909 and was visionary in its proposals for improving and beautifying the city. It took as its model Napoleon III's Paris, as redesigned by Georges-Eugène Haussmann, the Emperor's prefect of the Seine. The Plan envisioned a system of public parks throughout the city; straightening the south branch of the Chicago River; building a major bridge over the river to connect Michigan Avenue to Pine Street, making a single continuous boulevard connecting the north and south sides; filling land into the lake to create an extensive public park from Lake Park (later Grant Park) to Jackson Park (site of the 1893 fair); widening Congress Street to create the city's major east-west boulevard; and, most important of all, building a domed neoclassical civic centre at a central place in the Congress Street boulevard.

All of this was described in an aesthetically pleasing volume, adorned with beautiful illustrations by Jules Guerin and Fernand Janin, thereby making the book itself a visual feast to savour at leisure. A limited number of copies were published and sent to the movers and shakers of industry, commerce and government, including the new US President William Howard Taft.

Optimistic blueprint

The Plan was remarkable in a number of ways. To begin with, it was spearheaded by a group of self-appointed men prominent in their respective fields. They were idealistic and public-spirited, genuinely believing they had the best interests at heart of all Chicago's people, and not just the city's entrepreneurs. Although they disliked the corrupt municipal government of the day, they placed considerable confidence in government in general to effect change – in a "democratic enlightened collectivism coming in to repair the damage caused by exaggerated democratic individualism," as Harvard President Charles W. Eliot expressed it. In this they were typical men of the Progressive Era, believing in their own superior ability to undertake such a project and assuming that, with the proper public relations techniques, others could be persuaded to come onside of their agenda.

At least some of the Plan was eventually implemented, though not always as conceived by Burnham and his associates, who lived just prior to the proliferation of automobile ownership. Congress Street was indeed expanded and extended as a great east-west corridor through the city, but it took the form of the first of the great expressways to connect the city's heart to its suburbs in the 1950s and '60s. The Civic Center never materialized, and its proposed location is now the site of the Circle Interchange connecting four major expressways. The Michigan Avenue Bridge was constructed in 1920. A lakefront park system was indeed built on landfill, though Grant Park did not become quite the cultural centre foreseen by the Plan. Nor does Chicago boast the neoclassical architecture shown in Guerin's and Janin's illustrations. Nevertheless, municipal zoning certainly caught on and is nowadays taken for granted in North American towns and cities.

Grandiose but lifeless

The Commercial Club was, of course, an élite group, making bold plans for grand public spaces, monuments, boulevards and buildings, an approach later opposed by the late Jane Jacobs in *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (1961). Unlike Burnham, Jacobs, who would later adopt Canada as her home, was more concerned with the health of the local neighbourhoods than with flashy public monuments, which, she was convinced, diminished rather than enhanced these living spaces. Tellingly, Guerin's and Janin's drawings showed lifeless scenes largely bereft of people – the very residents whom the Plan was intended to help.

When I was growing up, efforts at urban renewal often came at the expense of distinctive urban communities, such as the old Greektown on the west side, which was razed to make way for the campus of the University of Illinois at Chicago. Then there were the efforts at clearing the slums, with high-rise housing projects erected in their place. Cabrini-Green, on Chicago's north side, was one such project. Despite all the best of intentions, it quickly became a hotbed for criminal activity, as the social constraints of an ordinary neighbourhood, whose residents watch out for each other, had largely broken down. While people can keep an eye on activity in the streets from their front porches, stairwells in a highrise are hidden from view. Fear thus replaces communal vigilance.

While I do not deny the need for urban planning, I strongly believe that justice is more likely to be found in the ordinary activities of a government conciliating diverse interests than in a government bent on capturing its citizens' imaginations and mobilizing them for flashy, expensive projects not immediately related to their genuine needs. Moreover, real renewal of a city requires co-ordinated efforts from multiple agents, including churches, neighbourhood associations, ethnic organizations, and civic societies, in addition to municipal governments. Overall coordination by government is almost certainly in order, but it should never attempt to usurp the institutions and associations of what has come to be called civil society, but ought to support them instead.

Urgent need to protect

By now I have spent most of my adult life in Ontario, living in both Toronto and Hamilton. Although each city has its seedy sections, neither has anything approaching the slums of the south and west sides of Chicago, the South Bronx in New York, or the Watts neighbourhood of Los Angeles. Moreover, both cities for the most part managed to escape being fragmented by expressways, as seen in the successful opposition to the proposed Spadina Expressway in Toronto nearly four decades ago.

Nevertheless, we have little cause for complacency. We cannot afford to take our urban communities for granted. Neighbourhoods have to be nurtured deliberately. For some time now we have come to acknowledge our God-given calling to be stewards of our physical environment, including air, soil, water, flora and fauna. But we have not always recognized adequately our need to protect the human ecology of our cities. It's time that we do so.

If this calls for urban planning, it should be shorn of the promethean tendency to glorify the splashy and spectacular, focusing instead on working *with* rather than *against* the mundane efforts of neighbourhood associations, churches, businesses and other similar groups.

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EDITORIAL TEAM & PRODUCTION STAFF

Acting Editor: Bert Witvoet bert.witvoet@sympatico.ca
Circulation: Rose der Nederlanden rose@christiancourier.ca
Accounts/Advertising Manager: Ineke Medcalf-Strayer ads@christiancourier.ca

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Letters

Fear-mongering unbecoming a Christian

Philip Bom in his article "Planetary President Obama" provides us with a classic far-right, American conservative view of the world. There is the US, and then everybody else.

Any time Mr. Bom observes particular phrases in the Democratic platform that may well have been used by a socialist in the past, he immediately jumps to the conclusion that they are indeed socialist. Interestingly, if George Bush or John McCain used the same phrases, they wouldn't be socialist.

We need to be very cautious about these types of projections into the past. The world is not a static place, and 2008 isn't 1908. These types of characterizations cut off debate, pigeonhole people unfairly and do not allow any room for change, or reading in new content.

There is no doubt that Obama has a more mature view of the world than someone like George Bush or John McCain. We do, after all, share the same planet and all people are made in the image of God, are they not? Simplistic analysis of phrases like "building just, secure and democratic" societies, betrays ideology. In fact, didn't George Bush say something similar about the Middle East?

Extreme right-wing

The paranoia of the far right in the US, which manifests itself into such bizarre observations as "things could get as bad as Canuckistan or Sweden" is simply fear-mongering. Canadians must be flooding over the border to get into this conservative paradise of low wages, 45 million uninsured, massive debt and a huge government security apparatus, all brought to us by the conservative right.

Mr. Bom claims that Obama has the "audacity" to claim that making America more secure requires us to help make the world more secure, and that this equals eliminating poverty? This tortured logic would have us believe that there is no link between security and global poverty, which is simple nonsense. If the Middle East could create conditions for its people to live in relative prosperity, there would be no Taliban.

The extremes of wealth and poverty in the region and our role in it have everything to do with our lack of security. It is vital to give the rest of the world the ability to fully participate in world economy, prevent starvation and allow their citizens to be treated with the dignity they deserve as image bearers.

Genuine faith

Obama as president will counter-balance the Republican doctrine of world hegemony and help restore the US's moral leadership in the world. The current prevailing view of the right, which wraps flag, country and religion together in a civic religious sense, views America as the promised land of the Bible, and equates the US with the Kingdom of God, needs to come to an end. As citizens of the Kingdom of God we ought to know better.

I watched a debate at Covenant College during the primary where Obama and Clinton discussed their faith. I came away from that with one conviction – and that is that Obama's faith is genuine and sincere, as he was far better able to articulate his faith than anything I have ever heard out of McCain or Bush. That ought to matter to us if we are to separate faith from ideology. It is certainly something to build on.

The justice that Obama envisions does not mean that he is blind to the need for personal and individual responsibility. He is the first candidate I have ever heard who bluntly addressed his own community and challenged black fathers to be responsible to their families.

This is not about a "new world order," but a call to responsibility for all, both rich and poor. The scriptures call for a new way of looking at our "neighbours" and a Kingdom that transcends churches and nation states. Perhaps the US does need protection from that, or is God a Socialist too?

Canadians have as much to fear from the conservative agenda of "free trade" which has been a powerful assault on our sovereignty, than from any liberal call for mutual responsibility and building a just, secure, and democratic society.

Hank Beekhuis
St. Catharines, Ontario

The Shack is a transformational book about forgiveness

I have just read Rev. Versteeg's critique of the book *The Shack* in the *Christian Courier* and was very disappointed. He raised some good points on matters of doctrine, but he appeared to miss the really important stuff. No doubt doctrine is important, although it's also rather debatable in that many different branches of the Christian church hold various doctrinal positions.

Rev. Versteeg is critical of Young's treatment of the Trinity, his apparent unwillingness to acknowledge that there is a hierarchy within the Trinity, but there are also, in fact, Scripture passages alluding to the oneness and equality of the three persons in God. I found no evidence in the book that the three persons of the Trinity were "free to do whatever they want," but, rather, that they worked in harmony with each other. Versteeg went a bit far with his statement, "But of course, Young does this because he can't tolerate the Son's submitting to the Father." Interesting that he missed what Coby Veenstra pointed out, namely, that Mack learns how his unwillingness to surrender to God is at the core of his deepest pain, and that he does, in fact, surrender to God.

I must also disagree with Versteeg's criticism of man's "free choice" in the book, and did not gather from the book that God is "happy" with our choices. The book appears to be biblically correct when it indicates that God does, in fact, allow us to make choices.

I am also disappointed at how Versteeg berates Young's criticsm of the church. Versteeg acknowledges that the church as an institution sometimes fails; indeed, Christ did not have to die for, or redeem, a perfect church. But he is critical that in this story the church actually did fail. In my ministry, as a chaplaincy volunteer in prison, I deal with people who have sometimes been failed by the church. For some broken people the church has indeed been an unsafe place, where they have been judged and even condemned, instead of loved or forgiven.

The book has given me a much greater picture of the depth of God's love for us (particularly broken people, with whom Christ so identified), and the power of forgiveness! It is awesome! I have been a Christian all my life, I read my Bible, I have listened to Sunday sermons my entire life (okay, I've slept through a few), but I have never heard such a powerful message of the Good News. Through this encounter with God, Mack was able to forgive a father who so horribly abused his family, and forgive a man who abducted, raped, and murdered his little daughter. And he was able to come to peace with, and surrender to God who had allowed all these horrific things to happen to him! Amazing, absolutely awesome! How many people aren't there who can identify with this story, and who receive healing, and the ability to forgive!

In his criticism of the author, Versteeg quotes the apostle Paul, in Romans 11: 33-36. But this book has actually helped me understand all the more what Paul is saying there. Versteeg appears somewhat irritated and condescending that Young would touch on things about God, such as theodicy, which great theologians and philosophers have been struggling with for centuries. Isn't it just like God to reveal things to the most unlikely people!

I sincerely hope that others will not be dissuaded from reading this book. I agree with Coby Veenstra and believe that William Young was anointed by God to write this book. It's a very powerful book, a transformational book, which will bring healing and forgiveness, and restore relationships, to many many people.

Arie Hoogerbrugge,
Grimsby, Ontario

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News

Gleaning for change

Eating my words

Kirstin Vander Giessen-Reitsma, Guest columnist

A couple of years ago, I became the proud caretaker of two orphaned pumpkins after Halloween. They were a little overfed, but 48 cups of pureed pumpkin later, I was glad they were. We enjoyed all kinds of dishes with pumpkin through and even beyond the next year. They were an extraordinary ordinary find.

It wasn't until I began reading Alexander McCall Smith's No. 1 Ladies Detective Agency series several years ago that I began to realize the way in which I'd pigeonholed pumpkins into the "seasonal décor" category. In the books, Mme. Ramotswe (who happens to be Botswana's only lady detective) relishes a good pumpkin like we might savor expensive chocolate. A good pumpkin is a fine treat, but also a staple of African soil and soul that grounds Mme. Ramotswe, even when the details of an impossible case are threatening her faith in human decency:

"She stopped. It was time to take the pumpkin out of the pot and eat it. In the final analysis, that was what solved these big problems of life. You could think and think and get nowhere, but you still had to eat your pumpkin. That brought you down to earth. That gave you reason for going on. Pumpkin."

A staple food

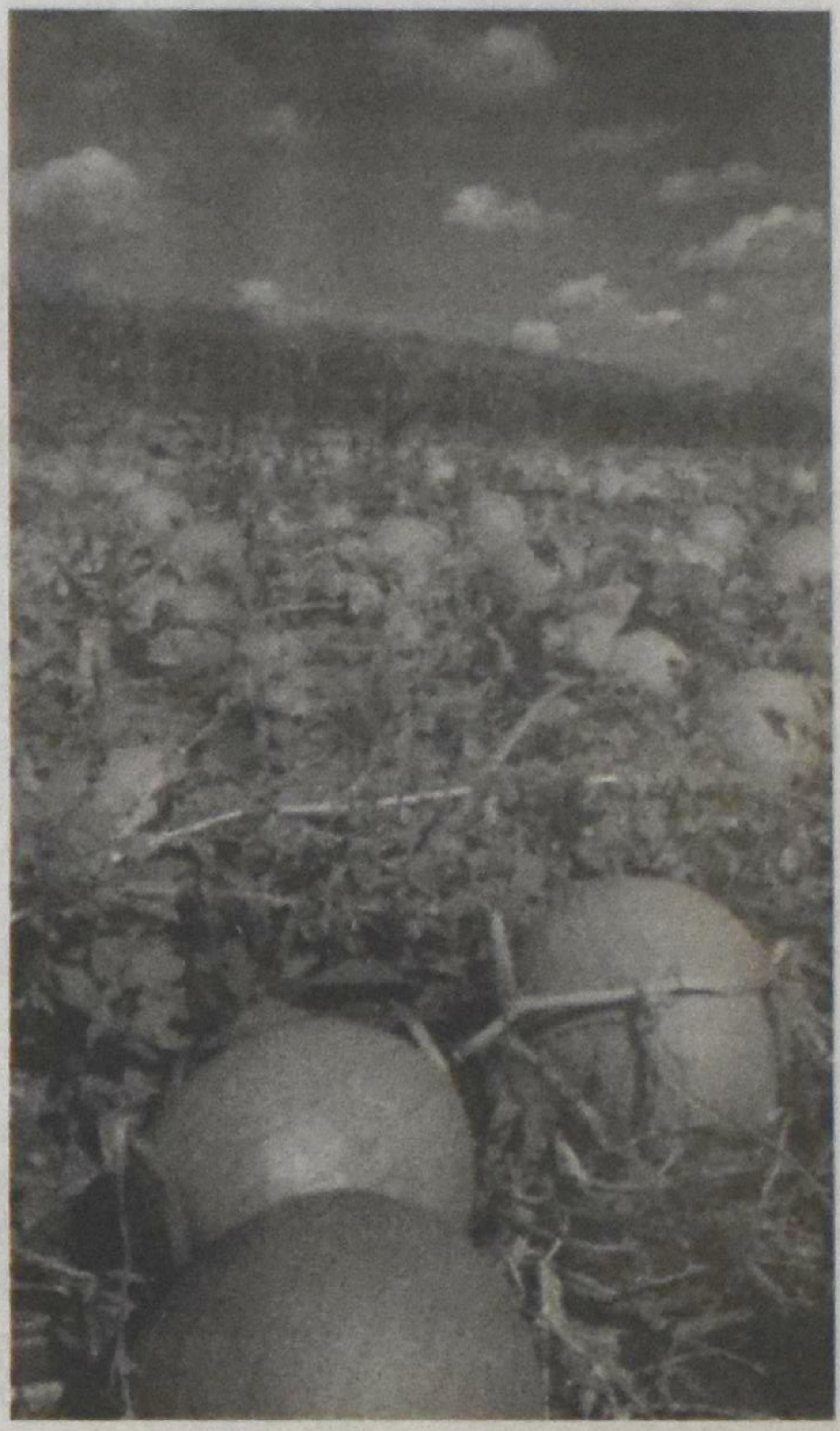
Now, I realize that author McCall Smith, a British male, is only imagining the life and thoughts of an African woman, but his frequent references to pumpkins still make me ponder cultural differences. The difference between our cultural approach to pumpkins and the approaches in other parts of the world is small but telling. The pumpkin pies we eat during the autumn are usually store bought or made from canned pumpkin, but beyond the ubiquitous pie and the occasional bread and bar, we don't have many other common recipes for pumpkin. In other parts of the world, however, the pumpkin is valued as a diet staple. Soups, curries, stews, or even just plain roasted-pumpkin is enjoyed in a variety of savory ways.

In the U.S., we buy the orange squash anywhere from the farm to Home Depot, cut faces in them and stand them on our front porches until they get rotten or smashed in the street. Leftovers languish in the fields after Halloween, evidence of our general abundance and the loss of certain traditions. I can't help thinking when I pass a picked-over field that still has hundreds of orange pumpkins dotting its brown autumn horizon that many of us are both blessed and blind. In this way, pumpkins help me be mindful of people around the world who don't have enough, who would be glad to glean a field for a prized pumpkin, especially in areas where it's difficult to grow anything in the dry, rocky soil.

A new way

This year, we grew one small, precious pumpkin on a volunteer vine out of our compost. I'll probably roast that one by itself so we can savor it fresh out of the garden with butter and brown sugar. However, I'll also shop the post-Halloween sales for locally-grown "leftovers" and maybe even find a field to glean. In a small but significant way, those two orphaned pumpkins literally changed my life, as I can't imagine a winter freezer that's complete without several containers of frozen puree. It's become a way for our household to honor local agriculture, seasonal abundance and cultures around the world.

I don't hold it against anyone that I wasn't raised freezing and eating fresh pumpkin my whole life. I've appreciated this later discovery and look forward to more such discoveries to come. For me, these subtle transformations of homemaking habits are not just changes in behavior, but integral practices of faithfulness. As I try and fail and realize how much I don't know, my hope is that the joy I savor in the sweetness of a homemade pie is but a glimpse of sweet, rewarding work to come.



To preserve pumpkin: Cut in half and remove seeds, cleaning and setting seeds aside for roasting later. Place pumpkin halves cut side down on a cookie sheet and roast at 425 degrees until tender (may take an hour or more for a large pumpkin). Remove from oven and cool until you can handle the halves. Remove skins and run the remainder through a food processor. Freeze in 1-3 cup amounts. You might check some of your favorite recipes first to see what they call for. Use pureed pumpkin in place of canned pumpkin in any recipe.

Pumpkin pie recipe tip: The recipe on the can of Eagle condensed milk is easy and very tasty, but try cutting the sugar in half and doubling the spices. The flavor is wonderful.

Pumpkin sausage pasta (From the *Simply in Season* cookbook)

½ lb. penne pasta
1 lb. bulk sweet Italian sausage
1 med. onion, finely chopped
4 cloves garlic, minced
1 bay leaf
2 tbs. fresh sage, cut into thin strips
1 c. dry white wine or chicken broth
1 c. chicken or vegetable broth
1 c. pureed pumpkin or winter squash
½ c. evaporated milk
1/8 tsp. ground cinnamon
½ tsp. ground nutmeg
salt and pepper to taste

Cook pasta, drain and set aside.

In large, deep frying pan coated with cooking spray, brown sausage over medium-high heat. When cooked, remove meat and set aside. Drain fat from frying pan and return pan to stove.

Add onion and garlic to frying pan and sauté until soft, 3-5 minutes.

Add bay leaf, sage and 1 c. wine or chicken broth and cook until half the liquid evaporates, about 2 minutes.

Mix in chicken/vegetable broth and pumpkin/winter squash. Continue stirring until sauce starts to bubble. Add sausage and reduce heat.

Stir in milk. Add seasonings and simmer 5-10 minutes to thicken. Remove bay leaf. Pour sauce over cooked pasta. Combine sauce and pasta and toss over low heat for 1 minute. Garnish with freshly grated Romano or Parmesan cheese and fresh sage leaves (optional).

This article was first printed in the online magazine catapult, *accessible at: www.catapultmagazine.com. It is reprinted here with the author's permission.*

White-tailed deer ....*continued from page 1*

Deer of North America – Naturalist Leonard Lee Rue III. Lee Rue said that he had asked his taxidermist friend, Elaine, to count deer hairs, and he goes on to say: "On the night of December 15, 1976, Elaine did not get to bed until 4:00 a.m. because she sat up counting…." According to Curt this is taking friendship to a ridiculous level!

Well, Curt did give me the answer to my question, which he, again, got from *The Deer of North America*. And the answer just amazed me. It made me realize how wise and ingenious God is.

An explanation

"The winter hairs are kinky, brittle, hollow, filled with air, and can easily be pulled out of the skin. Beneath these long guard hairs is a very soft, fine, kinky undercoat like cashmere wool. Elaine tried to count these undercoat hairs also but found it impossible. It is very difficult to see the undercoat, and, when the wool was pulled out, it was so buoyant that it practically floated away. The long, hollow hairs, combined with the undercoat, give the deer terrific insulation – protection against the cold.

"The summer hair is about an inch (25mm.) long and only .003 inch (.0762 mm.) in diameter. The hairs are thin, straight, solid, and without an undercoat. A summer deerskin can be used for a rug because the solid hairs are not brittle. Being solid, they provide little insulation, but they offer another kind of protection. The increased number of hairs shields a deer somewhat against biting insects." (*The Deer of North America*. Book Division, Times Mirror Magazines, Inc., 1978. Pp. 144, 145).

Two layers of hair for the winter: an undercoat and an overcoat! The undercoat is like fine cashmere wool, and the overcoat kinky and filled with air. Wow!

Curt adds his two-cents worth to that:

"By the way, in case you are wondering, multiplication tells us that this means 3,196,800 hairs on a winter deer and 6,211,200 hairs in the summer. Remember these numbers: They are just what you need to get into a pub conversation with friends who are talking about hockey stats. I'm sure they'll appreciate it; they'll laud your statistical acumen."

This may not be news, but it certainly is reality, and it's the kind of reality we pay no attention to, except when people like Leonard Lee Rue III and Curt Gesch I draw our attention to it.

Stewardship

Gratitude is a lifestyle choice

Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.
1 Thessalonians 5:18

Lisa M. Petsche

Thanksgiving has come and gone once again, but I'm still in a thankful frame of mind, for a couple of reasons. First, my American friends and relatives are gearing up for their Thanksgiving celebration later this month. Second, I like the warm, fuzzy feelings of gratitude and its by-product, generosity, that Thanksgiving inspires, and I've been contemplating how to perpetuate them.

Here are some ideas I've come up with for incorporating them into everyday life:

◂ Keep a journal that chronicles the goodness in your life. When you've had a bad day and it's hard to come up with anything to be grateful for, list the components of your life you can't imagine being without, such as your faith, family, friends, pet, health, home and car, or the pleasures you never tire of, such as watching the sun set or wandering through a bookstore. You'll quickly be reminded of the many blessings you take for granted.

◂ Say "Thank you" and give compliments more often. For example, send a letter to the editor praising a newspaper article you enjoyed (rather than waiting for a piece you find fault with and dashing off a scathing missive), or thank the co-ordinator of a workshop you found valuable (you can be sure he or she put a lot of time and effort into preparing and executing it).

◂ When payday comes around, rather than complain about your wages or the deductions on your pay stub, think how fortunate you are to have a steady income and perhaps also health and other benefits.

◂ Whenever you or a family member visits a doctor or an emergency room or is admitted into hospital, be thankful you don't have to worry about how you'll pay for medical care.

◂ Help someone who is going through a difficult time, offering emotional and practical support. It will take your mind off your own concerns and help you gain perspective. I work with people who are terminally ill, and I'm reminded on a daily basis to live in the present and that what matters during our time on Earth is the love we share.

◂ Get into the habit of picking up one or two extra items when you shop for groceries each week and, once a month or so, drop them off at a food bank.

◂ Become a regular blood donor if your health permits. (Each donation can save up to three lives.) Be thankful that you're in good enough condition to do this. If, on the other hand, you're a blood recipient, be grateful for the generosity of donors who literally give of themselves.

◂ Sponsor a child in a developing country. Our family has been supporting a young girl in Haiti for several years now. In addition to providing an underprivileged child with nutritious food, medical and dental care, basic clothing, education and with it, hope for a better life, sponsorship reminds our family not to take for granted amenities of North-American life such as public education, sanitation services, electricity and weather-proof, multi-room homes. To give an example, our living room windows stick and I'd love to replace them. When opening or closing them irritates me, I remind myself that our sponsored child's home doesn't have any windows and my frustration fades.

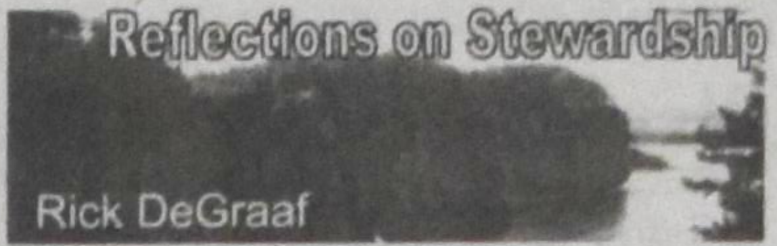
Everything I've read about the subject portrays gratitude as an attitude, freely chosen: a perception of our life as abundant rather than lacking and the world around us as friendly rather than hostile.

Blood donor

There's no denying we may not always get a fair shake in life, because the world is imperfect. But as gratitude guru and best-selling author Sarah Ban Breathnach writes in *The Simple Abundance Journal of Gratitude*, when we are grateful for the blessings that are present in our lives, "we experience Heaven on Earth," discovering "the sacred in the ordinary" and realizing that "every day is literally a gift."

Lisa M. Petsche (lpetsche@idirect.ca) is a mother of three and a freelance journalist specializing in family life. She lives in Stoney Creek, Ontario.

Reviewing and reflecting



A number of years ago I was asked to go through a "time-line" exercise using a workbook called *Perspective – Time Line* by Terry B. Walling. Basically it's an exercise involving reviewing your past and plotting out key events into a timeline that goes from birth to the present. In the exercise I was asked to mark key events in my life as they shaped and impacted me, for example: moving between elementary and high school (all my friends left behind), graduations, profession of faith, starting a new job, marriage, a move to Bangladesh, the arrival of each of our children, etc. Having repeated the exercise at least twice – I highly endorse doing it. I marvel at the path that the Lord took me to where I am today. Looking back on the ample evidence of the Lord's providing for me – I know that he cares about me, and that comforts me for the future.

If you like to know more about the resource I used, check out www.crmnet.org (Church Resource Ministries, Anaheim CA).

When I look back, I reflect and almost relive some of the changes and experiences that were maybe traumatic at the time: an accident, an injury, a setback or a death in the family. Also I recall the joys and "proud" moments of accomplishment – that "win", the graduation and the hoopla that went with it – our wedding and holding our first child. There are the big "Wows" and happy moments but also the sad losses – like a favourite Paka or Aunt. Along the way those embarrassing bloopers also come to mind – which I would rather forget – but there they are and they humble me. As I age my time line lengthens with growth experiences, maturing and fulfillment. Plotting out my story helps me see setbacks and successes in their proper perspective, and opens me up for future opportunities.

But even if you don't take the trouble to journal your story and plot it on a time line, consider taking some time out to do a simple review. Consider how you have been enabled by God to use your time and to develop your skills, abilities and aptitudes in the various roles of life that God has given you. Review your various roles in life – whether as a child, as a brother or sister, a friend, a spouse, a classmate, a fellow worker, an employee or an employer, as a church member or elder or deacon or Sunday School teacher. When you look back pay particular attention to pivotal or key life experiences – ones that changed things in your life; experiences that were turning points or decision-makers that led you or deflected you into another direction.

As you review consider an "acid test". Ask yourself how you have engaged your time and talents in God's great Kingdom enterprise. Consider how you invested your time in relationships with family, friends and others to genuinely express God's care for all his creatures and his creation. The "acid test" is a spiritual one – because God wants to draw you closer – as close as his Holy Spirit.

It is a healthy thing to take a "time-out" to review because when you do, it causes you to reflect – but that reflection becomes a real blessing when it helps you focus on God and his tremendous faithfulness to you. I don't keep a daily journal or personal diary, but I know people who do regularly take the time to review their day or week – often associated with their "time-out' for devotions. They remind me how blessed they feel when they are able to look back and see how faithful God is. That was also my experience when I wrote my story and plotted out my time line for the exercise above. It is a story that continues as I take the time to review and reflect and add new points along the way.

Reviewing and reflecting: it's about God's faithfulness. A steward is wise to invest his or her time in doing it!

Stewardly tip: Journals/Dairies A diary is a record of a day's events – much like a day timer. A journal or a journal entry in a dairy records particular thoughts or feelings – prayer concerns and anxieties – moments of joy. A diary is often dated with space for each day, however, a journal is best to be simply lined – you date the entries, and space is fluid. Both are highly personal – especially a journal.

Readers: Share your Stewardly tips so that we all can make better use of the resources God has entrusted to us. Submit your suggestions (by mail to *Christian Courier* or by email to my address below) and provide your contact information so that we can acknowledge your contribution or ask you for more details.

Next issue: Re-committing and recording

Rick DeGraaf works for Christian Stewardship Services in Markham, Ontario. Rick's email: rickd@csservices.ca

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Church

Ultraconservative Islam on rise in Egypt, elsewhere

CAIRO, Egypt (ICC) – The Muslim call to prayer fills the halls of a Cairo computer shopping center, followed immediately by the click of locking doors as the young, bearded tech salesmen close shop and line up in rows to pray.

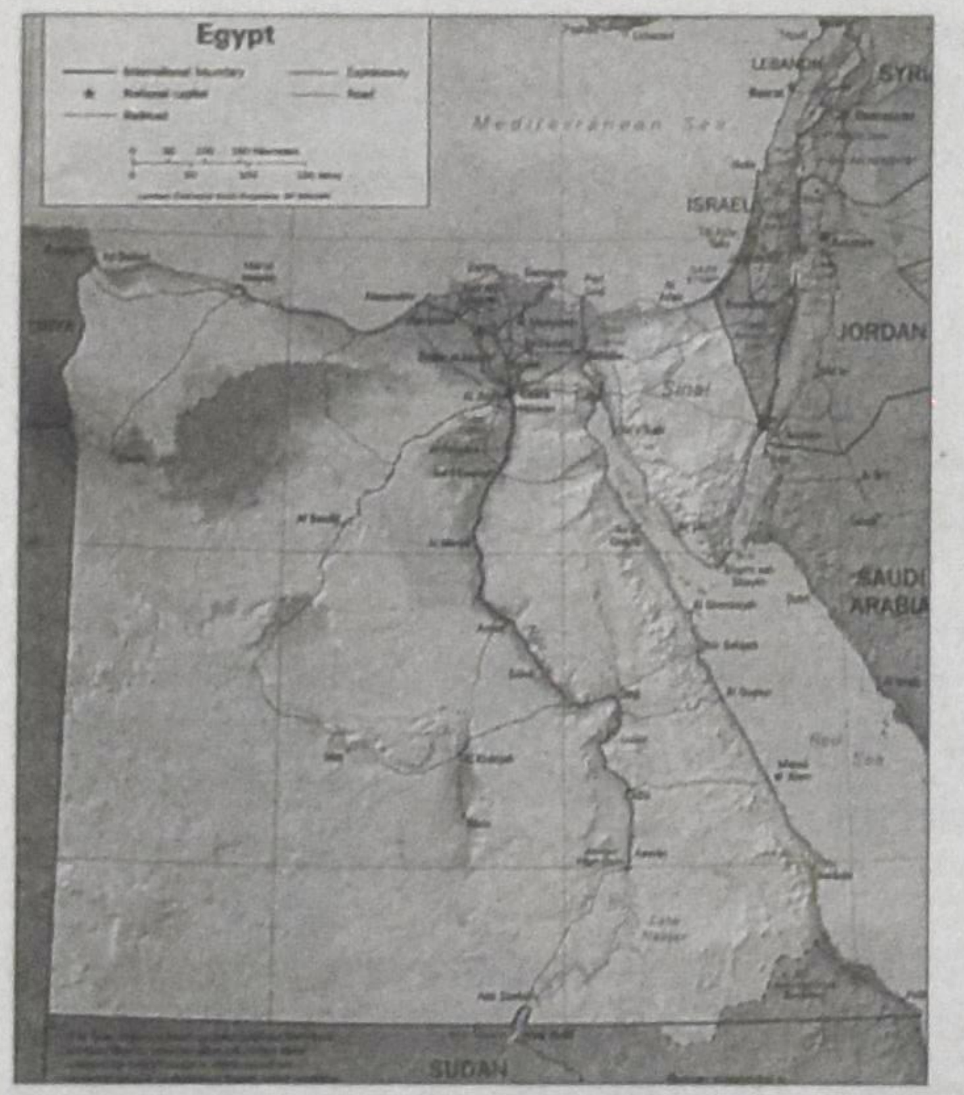
Business grinding to a halt for daily prayers is not unusual in conservative Saudi Arabia, but until recently it was rare in the Egyptian capital, especially in affluent commercial districts like Mohandiseen, where the mall is located.

But nearly the entire three-story mall is made up of computer stores run by Salafis, an ultraconservative Islamic movement that has grown dramatically across the Middle East in recent years.

Critics worry that the rise of Salafists in Egypt, as well as in other Arab countries such as Jordan and Lebanon, will crowd out the more tolerant version of Islam long practiced there. They also warn that the doctrine is only a few shades away from that of violent groups like al-Qaida – that it effectively preaches "Yes to jihad, just not now."

In the broad spectrum of Islamic thought, Salafism is on the extreme conservative end. Saudi Arabia's Wahhabi interpretation is considered its forerunner, and Saudi preachers on satellite TV and the Internet have been key to its Salafism's spread.

Salafist groups are gaining in numbers and influence across the Middle East. In Jordan, a Salafist was chosen as head of the old-guard opposition group, the Muslim Brotherhood. In Kuwait, Salafists were elected to parliament and are leading the resistance to any change they believe threatens traditional Islamic values.



Back to Muhammad

The gains for Salafists arose after nationalism and democratic reform failed to fulfill promises to improve people's lives. Egypt has been at the forefront of change in both directions, toward liberalization in the 1950s and '60s and back to conservatism more recently.

The growth of Salafism is visible in dress. In many parts of Cairo women wear the "niqab," a veil which shows at most the eyes, rather than the "hijab" scarf that merely covers the hair. The men grow their beards long and often shave off mustaches, a style said to imitate the Prophet Muhammad.

The word *salafi* in Arabic means "ancestor," harking back to a purportedly purer form of Islam said to have been practiced by Muhammad and his companions in the 7th century. Salafism preaches strict segregation of the sexes and resists any innovation or adoption of Western ways seen as immoral.

"When you are filled with stress and uncertainty, black and white is very good, it's very easy to manage," said Selma Cook, an Australian convert to Islam who for more than a decade described herself as a Salafi.

Desire for purity

"They want to make sure everything is authentic," said Cook, who has moved away from Salafist thought but still works for Hoda, a Cairo-based Salafi satellite channel.

In most of the region, Salafism has been a purely social movement calling for an ultra-conservative lifestyle. Most Salafis shun politics – in fact, many argue that Islamic parties like the Muslim Brotherhood and the Palestinians' Hamas are too willing to compromise their religion for political gain. Its preachers often glorify martyrdom and *jihad*, but always with the caveat that Muslims should not launch jihad until their leaders call for it. The idea is that the decision to overturn the political order is up to God, not the average citizen.

But critics warn that Salafis could easily slide into violence. In North Africa, some already have – the Algerian Salafi Group for Call and Combat has allied itself with al-Qaida and is blamed for bombings and other attacks. Small pockets of Salafis in northern Lebanon and Gaza have also taken up weapons and formed jihadi-style groups.

"I am afraid that this Salafism may be transferred to be a jihadi Salafism, especially with the current hard socio-economic condi-tions in Egypt," says Khalil El-Anani, a visiting scholar at Washington's Brookings Institution.

Highly adaptable

The Salafi way contrasts with the Islam long practiced in Egypt. Traditionally, Egyptian men and women mix rather freely and Islamic doctrine has been influenced by local, traditional practices and an easygoing attitude to moral foibles.

But Salafism has proved highly adaptable, appealing to Egypt's wealthy businessmen, the middle class and even the urban poor – cutting across class in an otherwise rigidly hierarchical society.

In Cairo's wealthy enclaves of Maadi and Nasr City, robed, upper-class Salafis drive BMWs to their engineering firms, while their wives stay inside large homes surrounded by servants and children.

Sara Soliman and her businessman husband, Ahmed el-Shafei, both received the best education Egypt had to offer, first at a German-run school, then at the elite American University in Cairo. But they have now chosen the Salafi path.

"We were losing our identity. Our identity is Islamic," 27-year-old Soliman said from behind an all-covering black niqab as she sat with her husband in a Maadi restaurant.

"In our (social) class, none of us are brought up to be strongly practicing," added el-Shafei, in American-accented English, a legacy of a U.S. boyhood. Now, he and his wife said, they live Islam as "a whole way of life," rather than just a set of obligations such as daily prayers and fasting during the holy month of Ramadan.

Getting the word out

A dozen satellite TV channels, most Saudi-funded, are perhaps Salafism's most effective vehicle. They feature conservative preachers, call-in advice shows and discussion programs on proper Islamic behavior.

Cairo's many Salafist mosques are packed on Fridays. Outside Shaeriyah mosque, a bookstall featured dozens of cassettes by Mohammed Hasaan, a prolific conservative preacher who sermonizes on the necessity of jihad and the injustices inflicted on Muslims.

Alongside the cassettes, a book titled *The Sinful Behaviors of Women* displayed lipstick, playing cards, perfumes and cell phones on the cover. Another was titled *The Excesses of American Hubris*.

Critics of Salafism say it has spread so quickly in part because the Egyptian and Saudi governments encouraged it as an apolitical, nonviolent alternative to hard-line jihadi groups.

These critics warn that the governments are playing with fire – that Salafism creates an environment that breeds extremism. Al-Qaida continues to try to draw Salafists into jihad, and its No. 2, the Egyptian Ayman al-Zawahri, praised Salafists in an Internet statement in April, urging them to take up arms.

"The Salafi line is not that jihad is not a good thing, it is just not a good thing right now," said Richard Gauvain, a lecturer in comparative religion at the American University in Cairo.

The Salafis' talk of eventual jihad focuses on fighting Americans and NATO troops in Afghanistan and Iraq, not on overthrowing pro-U.S. Arab governments denounced by al-Qaida.

Egypt, with Saudi help, sought to rehabilitate jailed Islamic militants, in part by providing them with Salafi books. Critics say President Hosni Mubarak's government sees the Salafists as a counterweight to the opposition Muslim Brotherhood.

The political quietism of the Salafis and their injunctions to always obey the ruler are too good an opportunity for established Arab rulers to pass up, said novelist Alaa Aswani, one of the most prominent critics of rising conservatism in Egypt.

"That was a kind of Christmas present for the dictators because now they can rule with both the army and the religion," he said.

The new wave of conservatism is not inevitable, Aswani maintains, noting that his books – including his most popular, *The Yacoubian Building* – have risque themes and condemnations of conservatives, and yet are best-sellers in Egypt.

"The battle is not over, because Egypt is too big to be fitting in this very, very little, very small vision of a religion," he asserted.

"Disestablishment" would make the Church of England more Christian, says British national newspaper

LONDON, UK (Ekklesia) – *The Times* of London editorialized: "Disestablishment would in a sense allow the Church of England to be more Christian. Its concerns would be less expansive, and a more distinctive voice might thereby emerge. Whether that is the right course for the Church and for the nation is a conversation worth holding."

UK Minister Phil Woolas

The editorial came after British government immigration minister Phil Woolas said that a separation of church and state is inevitable in the years to come – a position contrary to that taken by his government and all previous governments since Oliver Cromwell.

The outcome of the government's attempt to reform the House of Lords would be to strip the Church of its privileges, Woolas said. Within 50 years the Church of England would have lost the special position it has held in English life since the Reformation. Woolas told *The Times*, "It will probably take 50 years, but a modern society is multi-faith."

Jonathan Bartley

Woolas disestablishment stance is echoed by most British Christians, for a variety of reasons."Disestablishment is both inevitable and desirable for both church and state," says Ekklesia, a thinktank that "promotes transformative theological ideas in public life."

Jonathan Bartley, Ekklesia's co-director says, "Disestablishment is long overdue, and it would be better for it to occur sooner, rather than later. *The Times* is right to say that disestablishment would make the Church more Christian. The established status of the church contradicts ideas of equality, fairness and justice which Christianity is supposed to stand for. It also gives it special privileges over other Christian denominations, other religions and those of no religious belief."

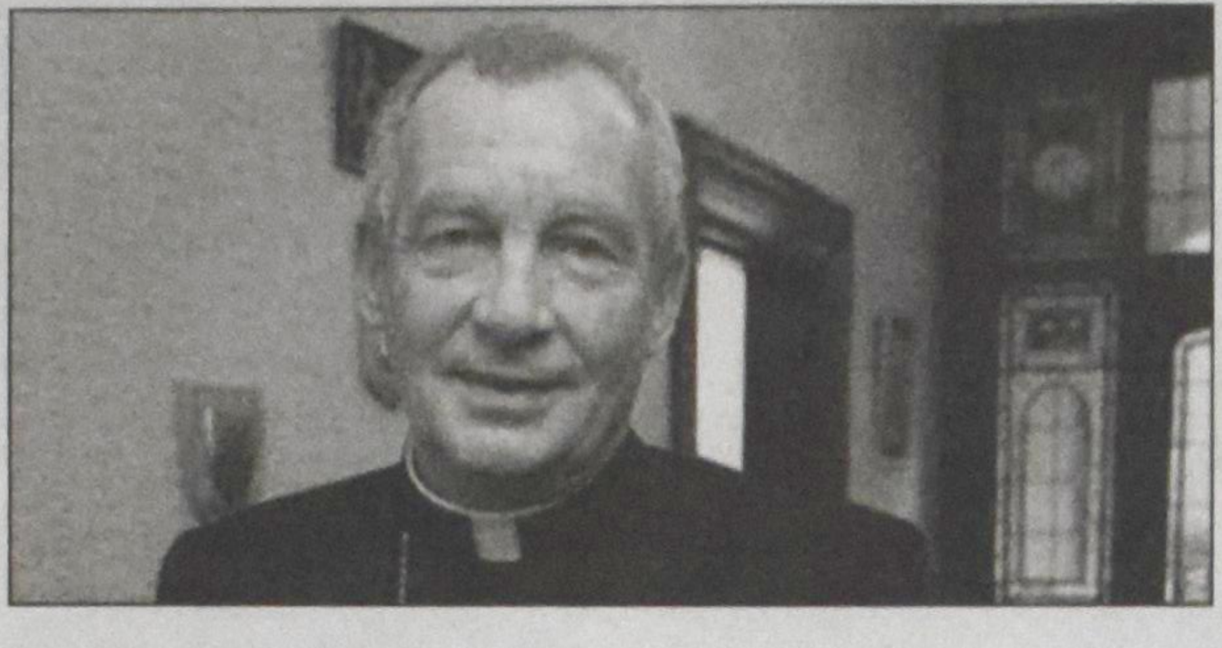
Bartley added, "Moreover, with the Prime Minister giving up his powers in the appointment of bishops, the Church [of England] is left in the bizarre position of being an unaccountable institution which can effectively appoint its own candidates to the second chamber of Parliament. This is not only unjust, but profoundly undemocratic."

UK House of Commons passes bill allowing human-animal embryo research

Welsh archbishop expresses Christians' dismay

Marian Van Til, *with files from catholicculture.org and New Oxford Review*

LONDON, UK – By a margin of nearly 3-to-1, the British House of Commons recently approved a "Human Fertilisation and Embryology" bill (HFE) that allows the creation of human-animal embryos. If the House of Lords also passes the bill before the end of the year, it will become law.



The measure was strongly backed by the Labour government and vigorously denounced by the Catholic hierarchy and by evangelical Christians. It passed despite the defection of 16 Labour Party lawmakers, including former cabinet member Ruth Kelly.

The law will allow much greater experimentation with human embryos. But among the most controversial provisions of the HFE bill are those allowing for the creation of "hybrid" human/animal embryos and opening artificial-fertilization procedures to lesbian couples. The legis-lation came to a vote under procedural rules that did not allow for amendments broadening access to abortion: a possibility that had further worried pro-life activists.

No public consultation

Welsh Catholic archbishop Peter Smith of Cardiff spoke for many Christians when he lamented, "There has been no public consultation on this question. Indeed, even the House of Commons have not had an opportunity to debate this, so short was the time given to the third reading of the Bill." Smith expressed not only being deeply disturbed by the passage of the bill, but "to make matters worse," he said, the consent of the persons whose cells are used to create human-animal hybrids is not needed.

"The creation of a human embryo is a deeply personal human action," Smith observed. "To use someone's gametes or cells to create a human embryo without their consent is an infringement of basic human rights. It is an affront to human dignity. It shows disregard for the consciences of people who may not want their cells to be used to create an embryo. It is appalling that scientists could take cells from vulnerable people who cannot consent and use them in this way."

The Archbishop concluded, "People have not been given a chance to say what they think of scientists using their cells, their DNA, without being asked, to make human animal hybrids. When people find out that scientists are taking cells without asking to make admixed embryos they will rightly react. Who can trust scientists, if they can do this with your cells without asking you?"

Somalia: Latest Christian martyr killed for requesting a translation

MOGADISHU, Somalia (ICC) – In the past nine months six Christians have been martyred for their faith by the Islamic extremists in Somalia. The latest victim was 22-year-old Ahmadey Osman Nur, a Muslim who had converted to Christianity.

Nur was attending a Muslim wedding ceremony when a bodyguard shot and killed him. According to witnesses attending the wedding, Nur had requested the Shik who was performing the ceremony to summarize the wedding in the Somali language because the ceremony was performed in Arabic, which many guests did not understand.

The Shik became offended at this request and asked one of his bodyguards to " silence the apostate." The Shik had recently been recruited into the Muslim militant group Al Shabab.

International Christian Concern, which runs the website <persecution.org>, urges Christians here in North American and around the world to pray for comfort and courage for Nur's family and community, but also for God's protection of the "tiny Christian minority in Somalia as they go through these difficult times."

American evangelicals largely in McCain's camp, Catholics less so

Marian Van Til, with file from Pew Forum

WASHINGTON, D.C. – By the time you read this, the U.S. will have chosen its next president – assuming voting "irregularities" in swing states such as Ohio, Pennsylvania or Florida have not delayed the election outcome.

Two weeks before the election, a Pew Forum survey of American voters was released, sponsored by the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, a division of the Pew Charitable Trust founded in 1948.

The survey periodically polled voters in "religious groups" beginning June 18 and ending October 26. The results showed a marked difference in the levels of support for the major presidential candidates.

The Pew poll found Barack Obama leading John McCain by 52-38% of those surveyed. But while Obama enjoyed a staggering 94-2% advantage among black Protestants, McCain led by a comfortable 67-24% margin among white evangelical Protestants. White non-Hispanic Catholic voters leaned toward Obama by 49-41%. Among voters without any stated religious affiliation, Obama held a 66-24% lead. Because of sample sizes, however, the margin of error among those specific groups ranged from plus or minus 5 per cent to 6.5 per cent.

Post-election, no doubt voter trends have already been analyzed and reanalyzed, including how faith-based voters may have played a role in the election, and whether the percentages revealed in the Pew survey held up at election time.

One entity that did play a large role in the election was the media. Voters overwhelmingly believed that the media wanted Barack Obama to win. By a margin of 70%-9%, Americans said most journalists want to see Obama, not John McCain, win the U.S. Presidency. Only eight per cent said journalists didn't favor either candidate; 13 per cent said they didn't know which candidate most reporters supported. What isn't yet known – and may never be known – is to what extent the frequent pro-Obama news stories and commentary voters heard, saw and read influenced them to vote for Obama, or turned them towards Senator McCain instead.

IRAQ: Christians murdered, uncertainty over who is behind attacks

BAGHDAD (IRIN) – Iraqi officials, leaders of the Christian community and ordinary Christians are divided over who is behind the latest attacks on the country's Christian minority.

All are agreed, however, on the need to address the unprecedented violence in the northern province of Ninevah which has seen numerous attacks on Christians since early October.

"Christians, like other Iraqi communities... have been subjected to killings and displacement since 2003, but in the past few weeks anti-Christian violence has increased and taken a new turn," said Hisham al-Hamdani, head of the provincial council of Ninevah Province.

"There must be urgent solutions to stop these attacks. This will be achieved only by deploying more security forces to ensure security in all areas, especially where Christians are dominant," al-Hamdani said. He blamed "saboteurs and `Takfiris' [Sunni extremists] from the terrorist group of al-Qaida in Iraq who are trying to impose a perverse interpretation of Islam by killing non-Muslims, or converting them to Islam."

However, a priest who spoke on condition of anonymity as he is not authorized to comment on the issue, said, "We have been targeted since 2003 by extremists but I can't explain the latest events, which I believe are politically-motivated."

The Iraqi Parliament recently abolished the quota system for future local council elections in six of Iraq's 18 provinces, meaning that these local bodies will not be able to have specially reserved seats for ethnic and religious minorities. The reason for the decision was the lack of census data on the numbers of Christians, Yazidis and followers of other religions in specific areas.

Thinking of leaving

Christian leaders have since then been lobbying parliament to pass a new law setting aside a number of seats for minorities, including Christians, fearing they could be further marginalised. Demonstrations and protests have been staged in cities where these minorities live.

"They want to weaken us and then exclude us from political life," the priest said, without specifically identifying who might want to marginalize them.

Osama al-Nujaifi, a secular Sunni lawmaker from Ninevah, said Iraq's Kurdish militias have been trying to change the demography of the province to increase the number of Kurds in parliament. Kurds have denied such allegations.

Hana Yousif Kaziar, a 54-year-old Christian from Ninevah Province, said, "I honestly have no explanation as to why we are being targeted like this...I don't believe we are posing any danger to any of Iraq's other citizens."

"I can only blame the government for not providing adequate security," he said. "All these past years I have been persuading myself that things would one day get better, but I think I have been dreaming. I am seriously thinking of leaving the country."

Anti-Christian violence in Mosul, the provincial capital of Ninevah and some 400 km north of Baghdad, erupted on October 4 when gunmen started murdering Christians and threatening others, telling those remaining to leave the city.

As of October 18, Jawdat Ismaiel, provincial director at the Ministry of Displacement and Migration's office in Mosul, put the number of displaced Christian families at 1,840 (about 11,000 individuals).

Police have estimated that 12 Christians have died in the violence. The latest incident was on October 13 when gunmen broke into a music store in Mosul killing its Christian owner and injuring his nephew.

Aging

The Activity Director

Daphne Simpkins

I was praying my way along on a drive to Birmingham to speak at an assisted living home when suddenly sublime communion happened. Just before the hailstorm hit, I knew a moment of ecstasy.

In the blink of an eye, I experienced transcendence and communion, went from rushing words of gratitude to sublime silence, and then back to the present moment when I realized that I needed to pay attention to my driving directions to the assisted living home where I am scheduled as the three o'clock activity.

This place has a formal grandiose name which reminds me of the people of my church. There, the newborns are christened with long names that belonged to important or wealthy ancestors. I marvel at such names, for my own was snagged fifty-three years ago off the airwaves from a song on an old radio program "Hit Parade." My parents told of capturing my name as it went by its vaporous way, and said joyfully in anticipation of the next new life coming, "Let's call the next girl that." So Adam, so Eve – naming the animal, me.

Grandiose names

I think of this moment warmly, going back to a time when my parents were alive. I wonder if they could have been happy in an assisted living place, fancy name or not. They both died fairly young at home. I wonder if I will one day live in an assisted living place for I have no children, as if that fact is the determinant. I have many friends with many children, and many children take no great protective or even an affectionate interest in their parents. We may all end up in the same kind of assisted living place with a fancy name or a cuddly name or a sentimental title – descriptive names chosen to evoke warm, safe, companionable, and sometimes grand feelings meant to be a consolation for growing old in America.

As the daughter of a real estate man who herself wrote the advertisements to sell his properties, I know about packaging a piece of real estate. Assisted living establishments, like planned communities designed and built to support younger families, have an identity built out of words assigned by someone with a marketing vision. The builders of these places, however, are not the people who create the quality of life for the older residents. One of the people who shapes the quality of life for older people who live in these cozy cottages or in meadowy establishments with promised roses and green briars is the Activity Director.

Quality care

Activity Directors book me in a hurry. They are always very busy, often running late, have lost the information to introduce me when I arrive, and they are very good at their jobs. It is not their preparation for a visiting speaker that tells the story of what they do. Their attention to the residents instead of everything else that could distract them reflects their devotion to the quality of life they are trying to build for the people under their roof, like a good mother does, every day.

Activity Directors plan meeting times and other social occasions for their residents. Sometimes they sponsor a beauty pageant or host sing-alongs. Bake cinnamon rolls. They invite me to talk about popular culture topics.

Today I am a speaker for an afternoon tea hosted in the Grand Ballroom. In reality, it is a weathered old lobby of an old hotel converted to an Assisted Living residence. The refreshments are laid out with care. I espy a fruit-topped cream-filled cake, hot coffee, fresh pineapple, and little crustless sandwiches which this Activity Director makes sure she explains have turkey inside instead of beef because of Shirley's objection last time to beef.

As the Activity Director explains the menu change, I recall how my sister Julie modifies family dishes to accommodate a new daughter-in-law's taste or when a daughter gets pregnant and appetites shift. It matters that someone in charge of the menu has cared enough to pay attention to what someone doesn't like. Or does. It's what we're all afraid will stop happening for us as we lose more and more control of our physical environments – that no one will see us as a special and important person.

Adapting myspeech

I give my speech for the first time about the many faces of Betty Crocker, a woman who never lived, and Aunt Jemima, a woman who never lived either. Both icons affected American culture and challenged homemakers, but were alive only as the marketing brainchilds of corporate businessmen. The speech goes its own way adapting to the audience, and the residents come alive with memories of good times. They seem to enjoy it. However, there are changes I need to make the next time I give the speech. I need more pictures and recipes!

I set aside the assessment of myself and my still-evolving speech and go to make my good-byes to Pearl, the Activity Director. Pearl closes the occasion by reminding everyone of the choir practice and the trip to Wal-Mart.

"You have a good life worked out here," I tell Pearl, and just as I do, I hear my mother whisper from heaven: "You can live an awfully long time in this world."

Hope for the future

I know what mama meant better now than I did when she first said it twenty years ago. Taking care of Dad, who developed Alzheimer's, wore mother's heart out. She died first. I took care of Dad when he was growing old too fast, and I wrote about the experience in a memoir *The Long Good Night*. These days I spend different kinds of afternoons with older people. Though my family experience was rich in dementia and, simultaneously, the paradoxical abiding and always orderly peace of my beloved Christ, my broader encounters with older people outside my own family have taught me that there are reasons to be hopeful in all the seasons of our lives.

As anyone does who has qualified for membership with AARP or Senior discounts at the bank, I look ahead to the end of my days and wonder which assisted living rooms will be mine and will there be afternoon teas and company or dementia and pain and human isolation? Will I rest on a bed that is too cold and where the sheets are all washed in strong detergents? My fair skin is severely allergic to harsh soaps and chemicals, and I wonder if there is any way I can write all that down for the caregivers of me to come. If I do, will anyone read it?

I have not done so yet, having witnessed that many times the ailments that plague us during our lives fade away in old age. My grandmother had terrible arthritis that seemed to disappear when Alzheimer's claimed her, and my daddy had heart trouble that was swallowed up by Alzheimer's as well.

Growing older has its rewards and other events of hopefulness that no one reports much. I guess we think we are being insensitive or ill-mannered to inquire of the aged what the blessings are, but I visit many places where the inhabitants are older and they are blessed and do bless.

My only plan for growing older is my only hope, which is in the One who has kept me so far: the One who doesn't age but who will keep me company as I grow older. He knows our frames and our skin conditions and the new menus that our aging bodies need. He has kept us company in the valleys and introduced us to that other state no one talks about much – ecstasy, unlikely ecstasy that came to me in a hailstorm on my way to an assisted living place.

Unbidden grace

On the drive home from Birmingham, stuck in five o'clock traffic in a city a hundred miles from my own bed, unable to race the thunder and lightning storm that replaced the hailstorm, I think about that as the winds reach 45 mph and begin to buffet my Honda Civic. I pray my way safely into the ongoing traffic, my car rocking, the wheels wanting to hydroplane and the moment of ecstasy experienced earlier in the day still shimmering incongruously inside of me looking for words to shape it into a recipe that I can repeat, because who wouldn't want more ecstasy?

But I know better. I cannot cook up ecstasy for myself. That experience of the presence of God is a gift. Trying to learn a way to produce effects of grace on command is a human impulse that got Adam into trouble and creates the fear that many of us flirt with when thinking ahead to the days when we are older than we are in this moment and won't be in control of our menus and may be living in a place we didn't choose or name.

But we won't be growing older alone. We all grow older with the One who doesn't. Instantly, God-given faith triggers gratitude and becomes a hymn of praise for the abundant life in Christ that Pearl, the Activity Director, and I acknowledged today. A grateful life is possible all the days of our Jesus-saved lives.

We receive and taste it: this life of grace with streams of blessings hoped for, sought, and paradoxically found just as it is promised in the Word where he says, "We will make our home with you."

- In our homes.
- All the homes of our lives.
- On the road in a hailstorm and later in the wind and rain.
- In old hotel lobbies now optimistically renamed Grand Ballrooms.
- In a room-for-one where was there was once a happy couple, at midnight or midmorning, in our youth and when we are no longer young.

I am no longer young and I knew ecstasy again today. I do not need more ecstasy to be content with the life given by my Creator (I can be abased. Ask anyone who has had shingles or lived with Alzheimer's in the house), but I report the abounding, and I have faith that sublime joy continues to happen to others all their lives too though people may not be able to speak about it easily.

The One who came to fix what Adam broke knows how to make each day's activity good in its own way, every day, for each one of us, all our lives long. Jesus promised. Jesus has all that he needs to do it.

And no matter what our age or where we live or the weather, Jesus does not stop.

Daphne Simpkins (daphnesimpkins@prodigy.net) lives in Montgomery, Alabama.

Outreach

Planting seeds at the Lockside Cove Café

Sonya VanderVeen Feddema

On June 7, 2008, Covenant Christian Reformed Church (CRC) in St. Catharines, Ontario, officially opened the Lockside Cove Café. The Café, formerly called the Riviera Restaurant, is a small restaurant, located on the property adjacent to Covenant. *Christian Courier* interviewed Tammy Vahrmeyer, Café Coordinator, to learn more about this outreach ministry.

How did God lead Covenant CRC to establish this café?

When the property was put up for sale, some members of the church thought it would be a great location if we wanted to use the building for youth programs, or the lot for extra parking. Many other ideas for its use were also brought forward. Since the building was already a restaurant, it was decided that a café belonging to the church might be a great place to start.

What is its mission?

Our mission is to be a Christian presence in the community. We want to be a safe haven for people to come to and to feel welcomed, a place to have some coffee and to feel like they belong. We would love to "plant seeds," but never in an overbearing way. If people have faith-based questions, our volunteers would love to be able to answer them, or to give them a book or pamphlet that might be helpful. But the volunteers are really there to listen if anyone needs a friend. We often say that the Café is an "outreach ministry in a restaurant setting."

What challenges did Covenant face in creating this new ministry?

There were many! We called them "speed bumps" on our journey to opening. The majority had to do with the City of St. Catharines, dealing with zoning, renovations, and inspections.

What role did volunteers play in establishing the Café?

Volunteers were a huge, integral part of establishing the Café! We had so much help in terms of all the renovations – drywall, painting, plumbing, and exterior work. Also, donations – not just monetary ones – were a huge help!

How is the Café governed and financed?

Originally, there was a Property Development Team (PDT) made up of members of Covenant who had the vision to establish the Café. They got it up and running. First, the vision was proposed to the congregation, who voted with a large majority to try it out. From there, we started the Lockside Operations Committee. It also is made up of members of our congregation, including me, some volunteers at the Café, a deacon, a member of the Outreach Ministries Team (OMT), and several other members of the congregation. This committee makes all the final decisions on operating the Café, for example, menu items, hours of operation, general policies, and guidelines.

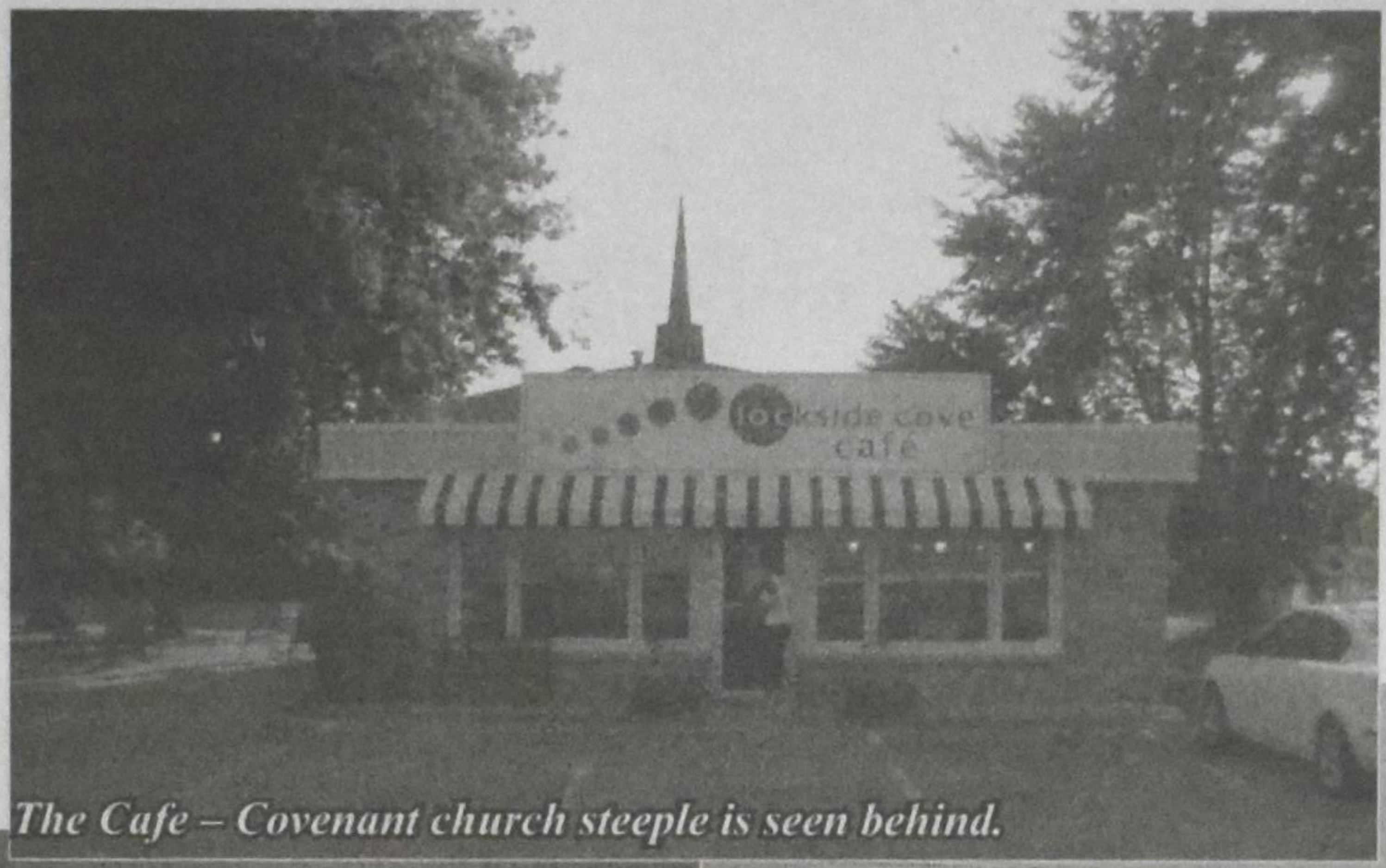
As for financing, we applied for a grant from Diaconal Ministries – Operation Manna. We received $8,500.00 for our first year of operation and a little less than that for the next two years. Also, from an anonymous donor, we received a very generous donation to go toward renovations. Besides that, through a weekly collection, the congregation is very generous in helping with paying off the mortgage. The day-to-day operations are covered by our patrons. Their freewill offerings are very generous!

Describe your leadership role at the Café. How did God lead you to this job? When you look back at your life, can you see how he prepared you for it?

I wouldn't necessarily call myself a leader in this role. My position is Café Coordinator. I am responsible for making sure all the shifts are filled, inventory is stocked, and money is managed.

When I look back, it is interesting to see how I landed in this spot. I was first asked to be a member of OMT. I hesitated because I didn't think I knew anything about outreach – being a new Christian and all! I decided to try it out anyway. At my first meeting, it was mentioned that the new PDT would like an OMT member to join their committee. I jumped at the chance because I thought the whole idea of having a church operate a café was very exciting! I joined the PDT, and eventually I applied for the role of Café Coordinator.

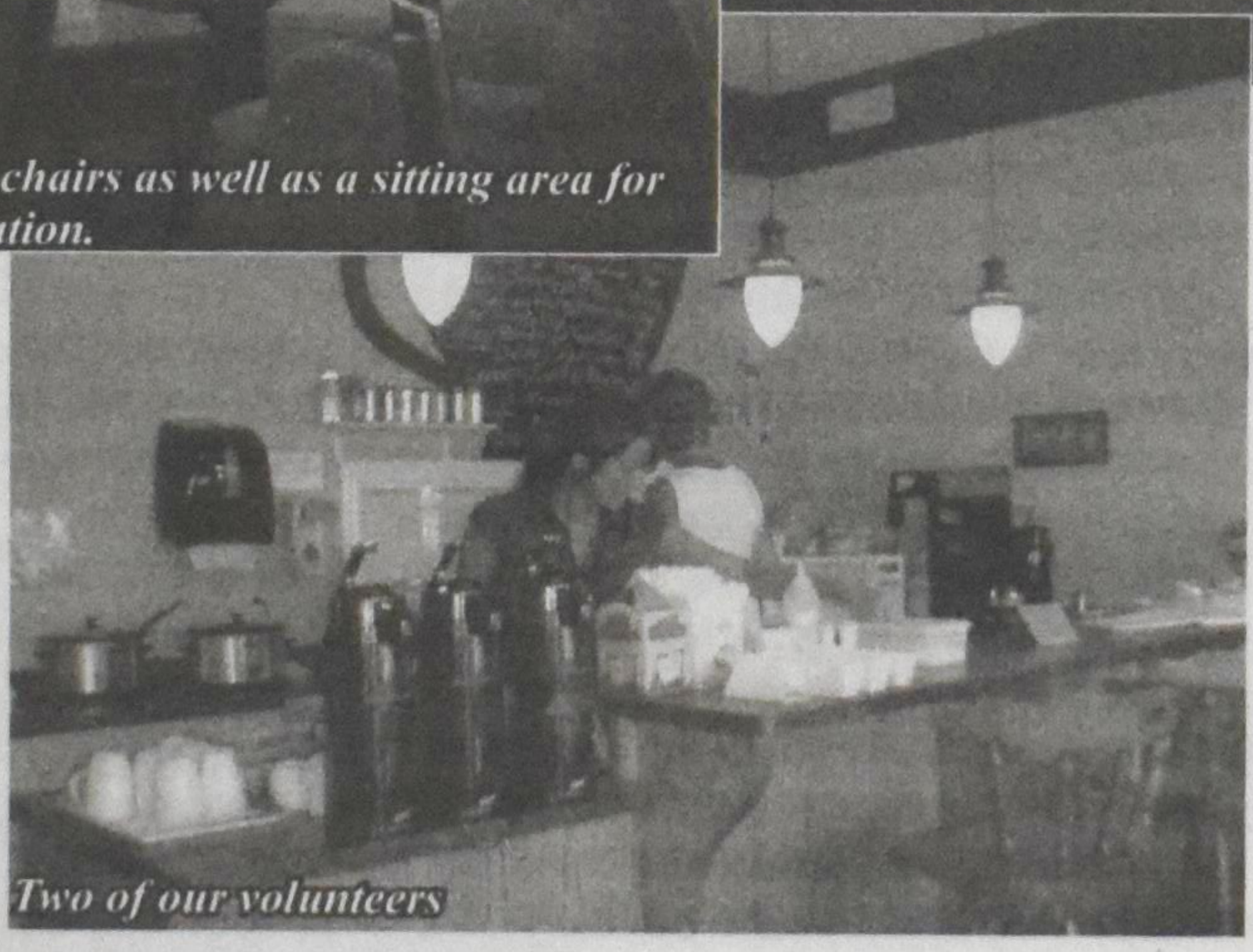
I think the timing of it all was incredible! My background makes it easy for me to be excited about this position, and I can see how God prepared me for it. It is mostly in the sense that our vision is to reach out to people, but not in an overbearing way. We want people to feel welcome, and hopefully we are "planting some seeds" in their lives along the way. This is similar to how I was brought to my faith in God. I kept running into people who "planted seeds" in my life, and I eventually turned to God. It is very exciting to know that we can be a part of that in other people's lives!



The Cafe – Covenant church steeple is seen behind.

There are tables and chairs as well as a sitting area for reading and conversation.

The view - Welland Canal and walking trail


Two of our volunteers

How has your work at the Café had an impact on your faith life?

Sometimes I get so caught up in the actual work, like filling shifts, that I forget why I am doing this. I pray that doesn't happen too often because I love being a part of this ministry and what it stands for. So when I sit back and think of all the positive stories I receive from our volunteers, it makes me so thankful to God because he really is working here. The Café is definitely strengthening my faith life because it is always making me conscious of God working in all of our lives.

What are the joys and challenges of your job?

I'll begin with the challenges. It's extremely hard to fill volunteer shifts. We have a great many volunteers, which is amazing in itself, but there are twenty-four shifts to fill each week which isn't always easy! Another challenge is trying to stay on top of ordering the right amount of food. Because we are a new restaurant, the demand is always changing. One week we can sell right out of everything. The next week can be really slow. I am getting used to it!

I mentioned some of the joys already, but, again, it is so inspirational to know that probably 80 per cent of our clientele are people from off of the street; people who may never have stepped inside a church; people who may be searching for God; people who might have a seed planted in their hearts when they come into our friendly, cozy café!

We have a guest book. The comments in there show how people are seeing the Café exactly how we envisioned they would. Comments say things like "friendly," "inviting," and "cozy." It's so nice to see!

Another joy is seeing how God's people work together for his good. I have a volunteer list of more than fifty people – isn't that amazing? – who are offering their spare time without getting paid! They enjoy doing God's work. And then there are the congregation members who donate on a regular basis to this wonderful ministry. They believe in our vision! Both things constantly impress me.

What advice would you give other church communities who are interested in establishing a similar ministry?

I would tell them that the "speed bumps" will slow them down, but not to let that stop them. The overall possible opportunities that this type of ministry can bring make everything so worth it in the end! People may contact me personally at tvahrmeyer@cogeco.ca if they would like more information.

Note: The Cafe faces a walking trail and is in sight of Lock 1 of the Welland Canal. The Cafe is a place where tourists and those using the trail can come to relax and get refreshments – another outreach opportunity.

Sonya VanderVeen lives in St. Catharines, Ontario. (sonyavf55@hotmail.com)

Nature

Flowers & Thistles
Curt Gesch

Counting

Did you know that there are 2,664 hairs per square inch on a white-tailed deer's winter coat? Or that in the summer there are 5,176 hairs per square inch? (That's right: *more* than in winter.) Do you wonder how I know those facts? Naturalist Leonard Lee Rue III asked his taxidermist friend to count deer hairs: "On the night of December 15, 1976, Elaine did not get to bed until 4:00 a.m. because she sat up counting…. " (This is called taking friendship to a ridiculous level!)

By the way, in case you are wondering, multiplication tells us that this means 3,196,800 hairs on a winter deer and 6,211,200 hairs in the summer. Remember these numbers: They are just what you need to get into a pub conversation with friends who are talking about hockey stats. I'm sure they'll appreciate it; they'll laud your statistical acumen.

Chinese harvest

I never quite figured out why naming things and counting things are relegated to kindergarten-type activities. This fall I'm dedicating my 60-year-old self to counting things, including years (Psalm 90: 12).

I started with wheat seeds. This year I grew some wheat in my garden, either for people- or chicken-food. Fernand Braudel mentions that in Europe "… from the fifteenth to the eighteenth century…. [F]or every grain sown, the harvest was usually no more than five and sometimes less. As the grain required for the next sowing had to be deducted, four grains were therefore produced for consumption from every one sown."[1] I wondered what my "return" would be for each seed I planted.

All summer I had tended these wheat seeds in what I call the Chinese method. I read somewhere, perhaps in *Farmers of Forty Centuries*, that northern Chinese farmers plant and tend wheat by hand, weeding and fertilizing and irrigating as if each wheat plant were a tomato or broccoli plant. By September the wheat had flourished and was turning golden, even in our cool climate (I believe we had about eight days of summer this year!)

For the counting exercise, I went to the wheat section of the garden, and carefully pulled up individual plants. Wheat doesn't produce one stalk, but several – or even many – stalks. I think the term for this is *stooling out*. One "plant" had so many stalks that it looked like it must have been produced by a few seeds buried together.

Child labour

Not having a taxidermist friend to count (let alone mount) wheat seeds, I asked some grade 3-6 students to count the numbers of seeds produced in each wheat plant I pulled up by the roots and brought to school.

I think what stimulated me to think about counting wheat seeds were the following factors: 1) I needed a lesson plan to keep 30+ grades 3-6 students busy; 2) I was too lazy to count them myself; 3) I was thinking about threshing floors (my wife, Betsey, has *Ruth* for a first name); 4) We had studied Psalm 1 and I needed a way to explain what *chaff* was for the grade 3-4 students; 5) I had read Matthew 13 and wondered if my wheat produced 30-fold, 60-fold, or 100-fold from my "good soil"; 6) We have been singing David Haas's song, "Lord, Let My Heart Be Good Soil" as a prayer before reading scripture in our local church congregation.

When I got to school, I announced my lesson plan and began by taking a plant out onto the asphalt in the playground where I borrowed a shoe and "threshed" the daylights out of the wheat. Then I took a handful of whatever-the-shoe-knocked-loose, letting the slight wind winnow away the chaff. Then I mentioned – casually, of course – that chewing wheat produces a kind of gum. There was a small stampede at that point for wheat seeds. Soon there were people grinning, chewing, and spitting out seeds ("Gross!"). Nevertheless, Sydney says she got enough gum to blow a bubble.

But we still had to count. I divided the students into groups and gave each of them one plant and left them to their Adamic task. The results were amazing. The lowest number of seeds per plant was 234 and several produced in the 400's. The champion produced 706 seeds.

Two of the boys even made a type of corral out of gravel stones for their 200+ seeds. To a 60-year-old teacher who spends his days counting seeds, it made sense: no use letting the little kernels escape.

Canola harvest

A couple weeks later we moved on to counting seeds produced by a single canola (rapeseed) plant. The seed was donated by Teryl Schopfer who brought me some canola from her brothers' farm near Lacombe, Alberta. I fed the seed to redpolls and siskins (it's dynamite feed, by the way; I've gone through a ½ gallon per day). One of the birds dropped or shat the seed in my back-yard vegetable garden, next to the main path.

I let it grow. It got rather large: a metre high and maybe a meter in diameter. It seemed to bloom forever. I didn't mind the yellow blooms, although I know that wild "mustard" in Wisconsin alfalfa fields is not meditated upon except with evil intent. At some point in this seed's life I began to associate it with the mustard seed/plant parable of Matthew 13, although my seed never did get to tree height.

Eventually some of the flowers produced small seed ponds. About this time I knocked the plant over, but it still managed to mature.

Just last week I took the whole plant to school and put some students to work counting the seeds. Colton (the 706 wheat-seed Master Counter) first figured out an average – 18 seeds per pod. Then the work of counting the seed pods began. A couple children chose to do seatwork – addition "facts" – after their seed-pod counts got into the hundreds and the job became boring. (Curious choice, I thought.) Other students continued the count.

After an hour or so, Colton ran inside to get the calculator. A few minutes later he returned to the classroom and handed me a slip of paper:

total pods = 2065

total seeds per plant = 37,170

See **Counting** *p. 15*

Fruit flies destroy harvests

Fruit flies enjoy a ripe mango

DAKAR, October 2008 (IRIN) – For years, farmers in one of Senegal's most mango-rich zones, Keur Mbir Ndao, 80 km east of the capital, were losing more than half their harvests. While some wrote it off to God's wrath, researchers told them the cause was actually an Asian fruit fly, Bactrocera invadens, first discovered in Kenya in 2003.

According to the Nairobi-based International Centre of Insect Physiology & Ecology (ICIPE), if these flies are not controlled, they can wipe out crops and economies worldwide.

Sunday Ekisi, the leader of the centre's African Fruit Fly Program, told IRIN West Africa's horticulture is particularly vulnerable: "The fragmented structure of fruit production, poor standards for phytosanitary management [agricultural goods crossing borders], poor management skills and lack of state and donor support makes eradication a difficult, if not impossible task."

Ekisi said Africa-born flies can travel and endanger horticulture in other continents' tropical regions. In 2005, fruit flies ruined up to 40 percent of Africa's two-million ton mango harvest. "It is not just lost crops, but also loss of access to lucrative export markets abroad, which brings in much needed foreign exchange," said Ekisi.

Three years later not much has improved, Ekisi told IRIN, "The level of rejection [of African horticultural products] that has been witnessed the last two years as a result of Bactrocera invadens is enormous." Kenya is not able to export its mangos and avocados to several countries. Less Ugandan bananas are exported than before. Ghana's citrus and avocados face the same fate. Ekisi estimated producers are losing 30-50 percent of their harvest value because of flies. To tackle the problem requires a regional approach, but first, countries need to control the problem within their borders.

The president of Keur Mbir Ndao's Cooperative of Fruit and Vegetable Producers, Ama dou Diakhate, told IRIN Senegalese farmers were close to giving up in 2005: "People did not know how to deal with these flies and were ready to cross their arms in defeat."

In 2005, Senegalese farmers produced 60,000 metric tons of mangos valued at almost US$10 million, according to the Ministry of Agriculture. But flies helped cut short the planting season by a month, with the last mangos harvested by August 15.

In a country where more than 25,000 are directly employed by the mango industry, fruit flies threaten not only fruit, but also livelihoods. The business development advisor for the US-funded Economic Growth Program, Dr. Patrick Nugawela said, "The mango industry has a wide spectrum of people depending on it, so mango flies affect everyone across the spectrum, from the producer to the exporter."

Starting in 2007, the program has worked with trade associations like Keur Mbir Ndao's cooperative to fight back through a nationwide government-led Integrated Project to Control Fruit Flies. In 2006 and 2007, producers had some relief with fruit fly interventions and the mangos lasted until the end of the rainy season in September. The extra month helped Senegalese farmers earn an extra US$5 million in mango money, according to export receipts.

In 2008, the Keur Mbir Ndao cooperative hired educators to show farmers that unkempt fields and rotting mangoes breed flies. They demonstrated how to attract the flies with things as simple as basil plants, and traps rigged with lady's face cream or nutmeg- scents that attract the flies. They showed how neem oil, a natural vegetable oil, can control the flies.

Mangoes buffer price increases

Diakhate said the longer 2007 growing season helped some farmers in Keur Mbir Ndao buy an entire year's worth of rice for their families at the end of the harvest: If people didn't have room to store the 50-kilo bags of rice, they would leave it at the store, and come by to pick up their rice supply monthly.

Reflecting global price increases, the price of rice in Senegal has increased by 74 percent over the past two years, pushing members of some communities in the rice-dependent country into malnutrition, based on a July 2008 Ministry of Health report. So far in 2008, farmers surveyed by the cooperative in Keur Mbir Ndao report, on average, an almost 70 percent increase in income over last year. Even so, people are not able to buy a year's worth of rice as before. Diakhate said, "We can afford to stock up only a few months. It is just too expensive now."

As of October 7th Diakhate still counted on producing more mangos. He expected this harvest to last one more week. But he recognises the battle has not been won yet. "Not all mango growers are engaged in the fight. We are still losing about 15 percent of our harvest. We need to stay vigilant. The flies are smart. We have learned just how quickly they reproduce". And vigilance takes money, said ICIPE's Ekisi: "Investment in fruit fly control can be enormous. It has to be a continuous process."

Country Living
M. van der Galien

Plowing caps the year's fieldwork

Ecclesiastes 3 says there is a time for everything, a season for every activity under heaven: a time to plant and a time to harvest. There's no mention of plowing – that's understandable. John Deere built his first 10 steel plows in 1839. The invention of the plow changed the rural landscape. Sod in North America was turned over and crops were planted.

Today, except for the grain corn, the harvest is completed. October and November are the months that farmers plow some of their fields. It's not usually done in the spring – that's when disking, cultivating, sowing and planting take place.

Plowing is a wonderful farm job. Driving a tractor with one wheel in a furrow and turning over small strips of ground sounds pretty monotonous. It might sound that way but it's not.

Plowing wasn't always an easy job. Before tractors came on the scene, farmers had to walk behind a team of horses holding the reins and the handles of a one-furrow walking plow. Farmers in those days were proud when they could plow an acre a day. And it wasn't always great plowing sitting on a tractor without a cab on those dreary cold November days. I recall plowing with a three-furrow plow and wearing a thick winter coat and being chilled to the bone. I remember plowing after chores and late into the evening just to get done before freeze-up. Old-timers in my area said you can never depend on plowing after November 5.

Efficient plowing

Plowing has changed in recent years. The bigger tractors and large plows have made it possible for farmers to work more land and do it more efficiently. Farmers who have a roll-over plow don't have to step out of a field. They plow from one side of the field and all the furrows face the same way. There are no ridges and dead furrows (dips).

I love my roll-over plow – five furrows up and five down. I can plow four acres an hour – five acres an hour in long fields.

When you're plowing, you have a feeling that this caps the year's fieldwork. It's a time to relax and reflect back on the growing season. You planted, you watched the crops grow, and you harvested it – and now you turn the soil over and let it sit until next May when you start the cycle over again.

It's also a wonderful sight to see the ground turned over in neat, straight furrows with no variation or grass showing in the furrows. The smooth, even furrows make the whole field look as if it has been turned over with one pass of a gigantic plow. But some farmers don't know and never learned how to set up the plow to the tractor properly. You see it by gaps in the furrows. The furrows should be smooth, not rough looking.

To plow or not to plow

Some people say that plowing is a thing of the past and that new soil saving methods will soon make the plow a relic or an antique for a museum. Maybe, but not in my neck of the woods. Plowing is still very popular on farms throughout eastern Ontario and western Quebec.

In recent years, I'm surprised that many cornfields are turned over black as soon as they are harvested. Land that has been in soybeans was left alone – they'll either do no-till or conservation tillage before planting in the spring.

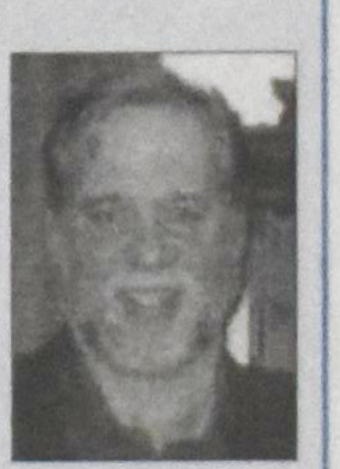
A crop advisor told me a few years ago that three-quarters of the farmers in this county (Renfrew) still believe plowing is the best avenue for growing good crops. Maybe it's because the county grows a lot of hay for livestock feed and plowing down sod is really the only way to do it – unless you burn it off with Roundup and no-till it, but that doesn't always work out economically.

Roughly 70 per cent of farmers in the county use a plow. Probably 20 per cent use conservation tillage and 10 per cent do no-till.

On the Ottawa side of Arnprior going east, probably 50 per cent of farmers still plow, 30 per cent use conservation tillage and 20 per cent do no-till.

Low beef prices and higher cash-crop prices have resulted in the restructuring of some pastures and hayfields into wheat, soybean and grain corn fields. Fields are usually plowed up the first year and no-tilled the following years.

No matter what type of fall tillage you prefer, isn't it great to have it done before the ground freezes and there's snow on the ground.



Maynard van der Galien (maynard@renfrew.net) has downsized his 420-acre farm in the Ottawa Valley at Renfrew, Ont. He raises beef cattle and custom-plows for neighbours.

Kuyper

The Living God in your midst (Part I)

Hereby you shall know that the living God is among you...

Jos. 3:10a

The pure, undefiled mystical body of our Lord Jesus Christ on earth, the church, is a wonderful entity.

Nothing impure can enter it, and not one of God's children remains outside. It has the anointing of the Holy One and possesses all knowledge. All the powers of eternal life, and all the glory of the Kingdom are hidden within it. And there is no comfort on earth ever tasted by one of God's children, no lasting spiritual refreshment enjoyed by a pilgrim on the way to the new Jerusalem, or it flowed to them through the arteries of the holy body of our Lord.

The body of Christ is very real. It is not a matter of the imagination. It is not a metaphorical expression of an idealized concept. On the contrary, the body of our Lord Jesus Christ is so real and completely present that, even when everything else disintegrates and all earthly elements melt away at the end of time, this body *only* will remain complete in every way and untouched.

Never tainted

Even more amazing is the fact that this Body of our Lord reveals itself on earth, both in existence and in deed; even though it is revealed through the murky curtain of our sins and spiritual failures. Yet the body itself never becomes tainted or entangled up in them.

It is easy to see how sinful and imperfect the church of God on earth has been throughout the ages, and so this church with all its ingrained corruption has never been anything but a faulty and veiled revelation of the Body of our Lord. Yet, no matter how intensely the fog obscures the radiance of that body, or how deeply perverted the situation of the church of God on earth, it has never been able to take away anything from the undefiled purity of the holy mystical Body of the Lord.

So, whether you hear St. Augustine or Calvin praise the Lord in their time for the blossoming of the church, or hear Huss and Teelinck and Comrie lament the afflictions of the church, in all instances you will notice that the water of life flows crystal clear, whether they rejoice or lament; they are equally consoled by the same comfort received from the one living God.

Good works

The same thing can be said about the *deeds* which are produced in God's children by this Body. These are the "works of righteousness." The work of God is done through these insignificant creatures whom God adopted as his children, and also qualified, so that of their own will they would want to do "good works" to the glory of his Holy Name.

All these good works were already hidden in the Body of Christ, so that they could come to life in us as members of that Body.

Yet the beautiful flower buds never bloom completely here below. For, just as there is not one pure snowflake that falls to the ground without being contaminated by dust from the earth, so also there has never been a good work coming from the Father of light to his creatures that was not spoiled in its execution. There is nothing perfect on earth.

Rather than skipping lightly over these details, it is better to examine the shameful sin with which we tarnish the most beautiful and wonderful works of the Holy Spirit.

Note well, however, that even when we admit this

Joseph Ignaz Mildorfer Pentecost *1750's*

fully, and do not cover up its truth, this does not hurt the Body of Christ in the least. For even if, with our sinful ulterior motives, we tarnish our "good works" and spoil them with our ungodly motives, that does not spoil those works in the eyes of the Lord. For the good works have come to us from the Body of Christ which means that they have been produced by faith. And faith sees to it that nothing can distract from the work of God in us. It appears that our "good works" are tainted but in fact they are only discoloured on the surface.

Hidden seed

These things are wonderful, and they are the reason why we hear God's children on earth, led by the holy apostles, cry out every morning and evening that we all stumble and there is nothing perfect in us [see James 3:2] – yet you will hear these same pilgrims, led by the same holy apostles, cry out triumphantly, "No one who is born of God will continue to sin because God's seed remains in him; he cannot go on sinning because he has been born of God" [1 John 3:9].

Note well, his seed remains with him, and those remaining seeds are the *hidden* powers of the *mystical* body of Christ; this *hidden* life remains out of sight just as the wheat germ remains hidden while it exerts pressure from within.

Just where can we find the key to this holy witness on which the justification of the godless as well as the peace of God's children depends? Only in the fact that the *Holy Spirit resides* in this body of Christ.

Divine labour

Christ is no longer here on earth. He is seated on the throne of glory in heaven. The crown of glory shines eternally, on the head of David's great Son, as the Psalmist tells us. [see Psalm 132:11]. He, who ascended into heaven, remains there for our benefit. He does not rest in holy inactivity, but just as the Father is always working, so also the Son works. And this divine labour of the Lord Christ in heaven is for the benefit of people.

He prays for his people. He is the assurance of the rich reconciliation in his blood. As our High Priest he attends to the holy of holies in Heaven and presents our one and only sacrifice. He also prepares a place for us and invites us by calling us with irresistible grace. So he does not do anything just *in heaven* but constantly works from heaven to effect his purposes on earth.

The Lord Jesus Christ stays in one place only. He lives in our human flesh, and cannot be in two separate places at once, even though in heaven so many of earth's limitations fall away. Heaven is not a place of magic, but a real world, and so the law of separation between one place and another remains valid there too.

But even though the Lord Christ is limited to one place at one time, such limitations do not inhibit his work. The Lord's work extends powerfully, and reaches out in various ways to every place for it possesses the glorious ability of the divine "*all-at-the-same-time*". This is truly a divine attribute; it means that at one and the same moment God reaches out to Asia and Bosnia, to Peru and your town, city or village. And, even though he is omnipresent to all at the same time, he is yet so near to all of us that he listens to our individual cries in our prayers as if they are the only ones addressed to him at that moment.

This divine "*all-at-the-same-time*" is also an attribute of our Lord Jesus Christ. Even if he is seated on the heavenly throne, his majesty, grace and Spirit are able to extend to all the corners of the earth at the same time. And just as our head can control and respond to any part of our body at any given moment, so also does the exalted Head impact his mystical Body.

No matter how far this Body is spread out, if any part of this Body suffers in the least, Jesus knows about it. Just as when you prick yourself on any area of your skin with a pin, you will know it immediately. In this way, there is no member of this Body, however insignificant, to whom the power of our Lord Jesus does not reach out so that he, our Lord Jesus Christ, will also be a comfort to that poor overlooked soul. In fact that Body does not live its own life, but allows the Lord Jesus to live within it. The Head controls the body, leads the body and energizes it. It is Immanuel who works his will within its members.

This is part 1 of this chapter from Pentecost (with Ascension Day) *by Abraham Kuyper translated by Jack Van Meggelen (jack@vanmeggelen.ca).*

Welcome to my perch

Bert Witvoet

Our own Golden Age

The Dutch lawyer and economist, Jacob Cats, who lived in the seventeenth century (the Dutch Golden Age), was also known as a poet of the people. His poems were rather moralistic and simplistic. They certainly are not popular today. I once translated a verse in which he advises a young person on what it takes to live a successful life. Here it is:

Serve God four hours every day,
And feed yourself three hours, I pray;
Seven hours, or less, spend in your bed,
Eight hours win your daily bread.
Two hours in pleasure you may bask,
Or occupy yourself with lighter task.
Learn thus to give each day a gleam,
And you will soul and time redeem.

A recipe for redeeming your soul and your time? A very practical answer to Psalm 90? A "neat " prescription for living under the wrath of God? I would say it's a regimented and somewhat legalistic formula wrought by a man who thought he could capture the meaning of life in a few neatly rhymed lines.

A closer look

"Serve God four hours every day"? What does that mean? Spend four hours in devotions? Help your neighbours four hours a day? Take four hours to be holy?

Not that we should quarrel with the practicality of his advice. Most of the content in this verse is common sense, when you think about it.

Feeding yourself three hours each day might not be such bad counsel. If everyone would heed it, people might actually do justice to the delight of consuming a meal. It certainly would encourage fellowship with others at mealtime. And people's digestive system would thank them for the courtesy of a leisurely intake of nourishment.

Seven or eight hours of sleep sounds about right, depending on your constitution, of course. Eight hours of work each day seems quite enlightened for the seventeenth century. It took labour unions a lot of struggle against demanding employers to reach that level of daily labour. And two hours of "lighter task" or pleasure also makes a lot sense.

We know better

Yet, to place all this under the rubric of redeeming soul and time is a bit much, isn't it? It domesticates our calling to vibrantly respond to God's love and mercy. Imagine the words of Father Cats as an appendix to Psalm 90, where Moses, the man of God, talks about time and eternity as follows: "A thousand years in your sight are like a day that has just gone by…. Teach us to number our days aright that we may gain a heart of wisdom, and serve God fours every day, and feed yourself three hours I pray."

No wonder Father Cats, as he was affectionately known in the past, has little currency today. It's not exactly a post-modern approach to life, is it? I translated the verse just for the fun some years ago, using it as a foil for what I hoped would be a more flexible and spiritual attitude to redeeming our time.

Ah, times have changed – for the better, of course. We know so much more and we are so enlightened. We know, for example, that the secret of living a successful life lies in ambiguity and complexity. We use our time so much more efficiently today – wolfing down a sandwich in five minutes is so amazing. We are so important, too, and that's why we are so busy. And we go to bed late because we can't miss that television program. Oh, and our mealtime prayers are quite enough time spent on devotions.

Thank you, Lord, that we are so much wiser than our ancestors.

Bert Witvoet is the acting editor of CC who also stays active by editing the Christian Educators Journal *and preaching the occasional sermon. He tries to stay informed by hearing and reading the daily news and Reformed by looking for writers and speakers who can tell the forest from the trees.*

The five-cup concert

My window seat

Mendelt Hoekstra

This past October 18 a music concert was held at Redeemer University College in Ancaster Ontario to raise funds for a scholarship in my late wife Marisa VanderVeen's name.

My family, my two parents, my five siblings and I, who are all musicians, came up with a list of songs that we were going to sing, practised them and met to rehearse. Three of my siblings live in British Columbia and flew in for the concert.

Our goal was to raise 25,000 dollars. If we raised that amount of money, then the scholarship in Marisa's name would continue on even if for some reason Redeemer's doors closed. Then the scholarship would be transferred to another school. The scholarship is for a student who is judged to be furthering the kingdom of God with their musical and athletic gifts, just like Marisa did. So in preparing for the concert and advertising I had the number of $25,000 in my mind. That is a substantial amount of money. I wondered if we could raise that amount. I was soon to find out.

The night came and, to my relief, the advertising had worked. The auditorium at Redeemer holds 1100 and, rather than count the people, it was nice to be able to count the empty seats because there were fewer of those than filled seats. I counted the empty seats to be approximately 300.

The concert was outstanding. My family sang, including Marisa's father and sister. Two of my children, six-year-old Zion and 4-year-old Jacoba, sang "The Hiccup Song." They fittingly received the loudest applause. For some it was very cute to see small children sing a funny song in front of 800 people. For some it was humourous to see Jacoba swing her dress back and forth while singing. For some it was fun to see Zion with his hands in his pocket sing the best way he could.

For me it was all that but more. It was Marisa and my children singing at a concert to honour the name of their mother who died. It was joy and sorrow holding each other. It proved to me once again that my suffering and praise cannot cancel each other out. They must live together. For me it is in that tension which I must live.

The concert was a success on many fronts. Many people had a great time seeing old friends. Many people heard some beautiful music and were entertained for the night. And as for the $25,000 goal, we exceeded that amount and raised over $30,000. I am so thankful for the Christian community.

When we knew we had raised that much money, my friend Justin Cook put it this way:

Three people were each given different amounts of suffering. For each it was difficult.

The first was given one cup of suffering, and, because he thought his Master was a hard man, he tried to bury it.

Another was given two cups of suffering, but he knew he had been entrusted with it. So he made two cups of blessings with his.

Another and his whole family was given five cups of suffering. They also knew they were entrusted with it, and so they went to work, carrying the suffering the best way they knew how. They threw a number of parties. At the last party, everyone there was generous with what they had been given too. And by the end of the party, the five cups had turned into 30,000 dollars and honour in one of their names. The Master who had entrusted the five cups to the family turned to them all and said, "Well done, good and faithful servants. You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness."

"Because she loves me," says the Lord,
"I will rescue her;
I will protect her, for she
acknowledges my name.
"She will call upon me, and I will
answer her;
I will be with her in trouble,
I will deliver her and honour her.
With long life will I satisfy her
and show her my salvation."

Psalm 91:14-16

Mendelt Hoekstra (mendelt.hoekstra@gmail.com) is the founder and director of the Music Therapy program at Bethesda, an organization owned and operated by the Mennonite Brethren Conference of Ontario, that supports adults with developmental possibilities. He lives in Vineland, Ont. with his three children.

Counting *...continued from p. 12*

If I can only figure out a way to get a tube from some canola plants to my gas tank, I'll be even happier.

Mathematical blessings

Counting, as I suggested earlier, seems to me an enjoyable, inherently *human* activity. Rien Poortvliet says that pheasants can only count to three and that is why they sometimes leave chicks behind. Roy Rogers' horse, Trigger, could apparently tap his hoof on command to do a sort of counting. But human beings are the only creatures that count out of curiosity, that count their blessings, or who rejoice that our Father in heaven forgives a multitude of sins. Counting can lead human beings to states of delight, relief, or awe.

I'm not sure if Abraham ever tried to actually count the stars or the grains of sand, but if my students had been around, they'd probably have tried to help him out. For now, however, we'll stick to seeds.

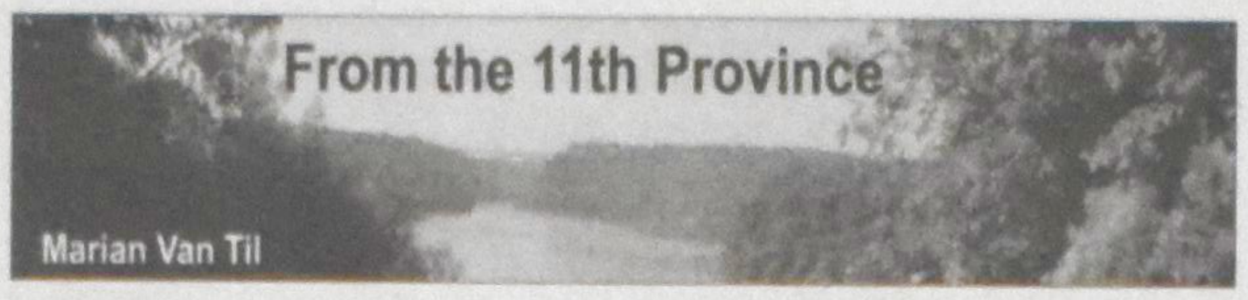
I got so inspired by the students' results that I decided I should also do some of this counting. So I chose a turnip seed that I had mistakenly planted. One seed. It produced one turnip. I know: I counted it myself. I suppose that if I left it in the ground it might have flowered next year and then produced a zillion or two seeds. But I never let things get that far: I brought the turnip to school and gave it to Evan. He gave it to his mom. She cooked it. They ate it. One turnip: I counted it.

Footnotes

[1] Fernand Braudel, The Structures of Everyday Life, Vol. I, p. 120.

Curt Gesch counts seeds and blessings with his students in Houston, B.C. curtgesch@hotmail.com

Manifesto



An Evangelical Manifesto (II)

Naked, sacred, or civil public square?

Last month I began introducing you to *An Evangelical Manifesto*, a document presented to the world at large earlier this year by a group of self-described evangelicals, including Calvinist Richard Mouw. It is a document that sought to define (or re-define) for the world, and perhaps for evangelicals themselves, who and what evangelicals are. We who are Reformed are also evangelical by any accurate definition, historical or modern – which is one reason this "manifesto" is worth a look.

I ended last month with a list of evangelical shortcomings (one could say "sins") that need repenting of, according to the Manifesto. This was my final paragraph: "Clearly, restoration of the principle "always reforming" is in order, and so the Manifesto calls for "deep reformation and renewal." It's not a particularly pleasant read when *you* are the subject of its critique. I find myself wondering how evangelicals have reacted to this document. (There's an accompanying study guide meant for use in evangelical churches.). I'll do a little research to see if I can find out. In my next column I'll look at that call to reformation as it relates to the culmination of the Manifesto: **"rethinking our place in public life."**

Well, I *have* uncovered some reactions to the Manifesto. But first I want to focus on its "rethinking our place in public life."

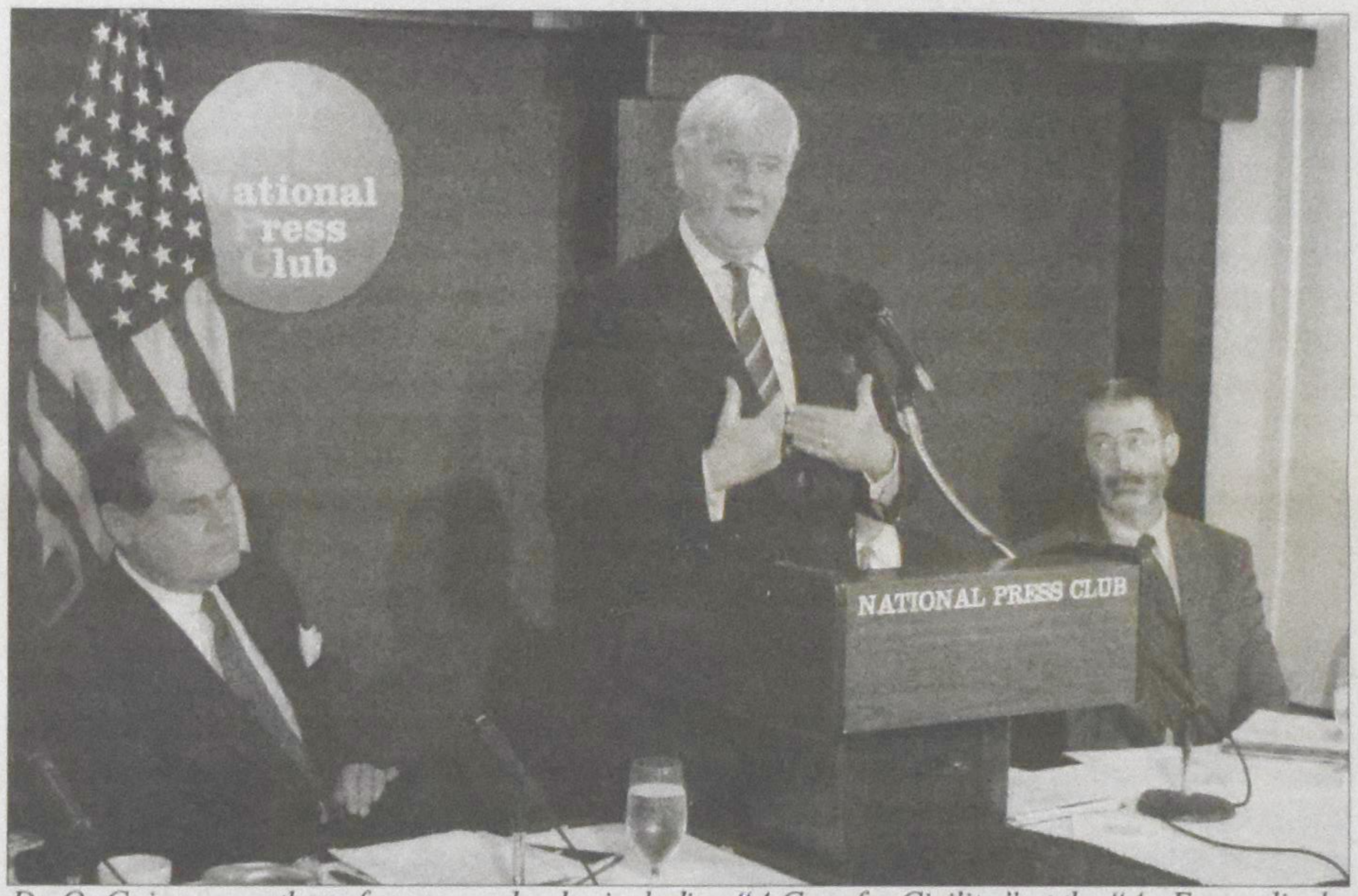
Says the Manifesto: "We must find a new understanding of our place in public life." That "new place" is not the place where fundamentalists planted themselves, *outside of* public life ("world-denying and politically disengaged," is the way the Manifesto puts it). Instead, say the Manifesto's authors, carrying the name of Christ "is to seek to be faithful to the freedom, justice, peace, and well-being that are at the heart of the kingdom of God, to bring these gifts into public life as a service to all, and to work with all who share these ideals and care for the common good."

Noble goals?

While that sounds noble, it's not written as carefully as it should have been (and that may mean it wasn't thought out carefully enough). Christ doesn't call us to be faithful to *ideals*, even if they are stated to be "ideals of the Kingdom." To even talk about "ideals of the Kingdom" seems to me an inherently unbiblical way of speaking. Christ did not preach "ideals" to his disciples when speaking of the Kingdom: high, even visionary conceptions of Good that he, and they, hoped would become reality if they all worked hard at their dream. Just semantics? I don't think so.

Justice – the foundation for freedom, peace and well-being – is indeed at the very heart of God's Kingdom and the world he originally created good. And God commands us to act justly; he doesn't merely suggest it as something to strive for. God told his Old Testament people again and again to act justly by feeding the orphans and widows among them, by helping the oppressed, by being fair in business practices so that no one, but particularly the poor, would be taken advantage of and face calamity as a result. Justice obviously started at home, though it included fairness to the aliens among them (while taking care not to adopt the alien's pagan gods).

And what about peace? Whenever I hear people speaks of achieving peace in a public (i.e., world) context I always feel the urge to roll my eyes and mutter to myself. "World peace" is simply not something God has promised that our fallen race will attain on *this* earth. In that sense it's an "ideal." The lion will lie down with the lamb only in God's consummated Kingdom, when all those who acknowledge him as Lord on this earth will worship him forever on the new one.



Dr. Os Guinness, author of numerous books, including "A Case for Civility," at the "An Evangelical Manifesto" press conference on May 7, 2008.

As Reformed-evangelical Christians we can, of course, contribute our time and financial resources to working for justice and to helping the oppressed achieve freedom, and those two things will certainly contribute to peoples' well-being here and now. But the well-being "at the heart of the Kingdom of God" is not world peace but that *peace* that passes all understanding, only attainable when people, each one's heart convicted by the Spirit, learn to fall down and worship at Christ's feet, becoming and thus revealing themselves to be his disciples.

We are to be faithful only to God himself, not to ideals in or of the Kingdom. And when we commit to being faithful to him we commit to serving him and only him; we are acknowledging that we love him with our heart, soul, mind and strength – and our neighbor as ourselves. It's the "neighbor as ourselves" part that then brings us to the public square.

Say No to naked and sacred public squares

The Manifesto warns about two errors on opposite poles from each other: privatized faith that "falsely divorces the spiritual from the secular," which then becomes "privately engaging and publicly irrelevant" (a "hot tub spirituality"); and politicized faith that uses faith to "express essentially political points that have lost touch with biblical truth," resulting in Christians becoming "useful idiots" for one party or another, and Christianity becoming mere ideology.

It's good to be warned of both those pitfalls. That we Christians – and Christian political candidates in particular – *should* privatize our faith is now a behavioral expectation by secularists; after all, "civilized" people are surely not so uncouth as to call on their god (who may not be somebody else's god) to help them solve public problems, much less to aid them to "proselytize."

The dearth of relating faith to public thought and action is referred to by the Manifesto as the "naked public square." The authors repudiate that position and its adherents as unjust because it excludes the majority of citizens, who are (still) "profoundly religious." (Many more and probably better reasons could have been given.)

The Manifesto also rejects a sacred public square and the views of those who "for religious, historical, or cultural reasons would continue to give a preferred place in public life to one religion which in almost all most current cases would be the Christian faith, but could equally be another faith." The Manifesto argues that in a diverse country like the U.S. (or Canada) "no one faith should be normative for the entire society, yet there should be room for the free expression of faith in the public square."

No one normative faith

I have misgivings about that assertion. Faith in the God of the Bible *is* the one normative faith, but we're not supposed to assert that in the public square. Of course, God requires of his people – people who confess Christ as Lord and who have (or should have) given up all idols to follow him – that all people we interact with be treated with the kindness of justice, treating them as as our *neighbor* (cf. Jesus's parable of the "good Samaritan," and think also of the fruits of the Spirit).

So we must not treat unkindly or unfairly, much less may we vilify, those who adhere to other religions, though those religions and the gods they worship are false. That said, and keeping it in mind as our duty, both the U.S. and Canada are indeed countries in which sizeable majorities of the population still self-identify as Christian (of whatever stripe and potency). So it seems to me there's no injustice done when American or Canadian law-makers remember that the majority of its citizens call themselves Christians. A truly Christian majority will never be a tyrannical one.

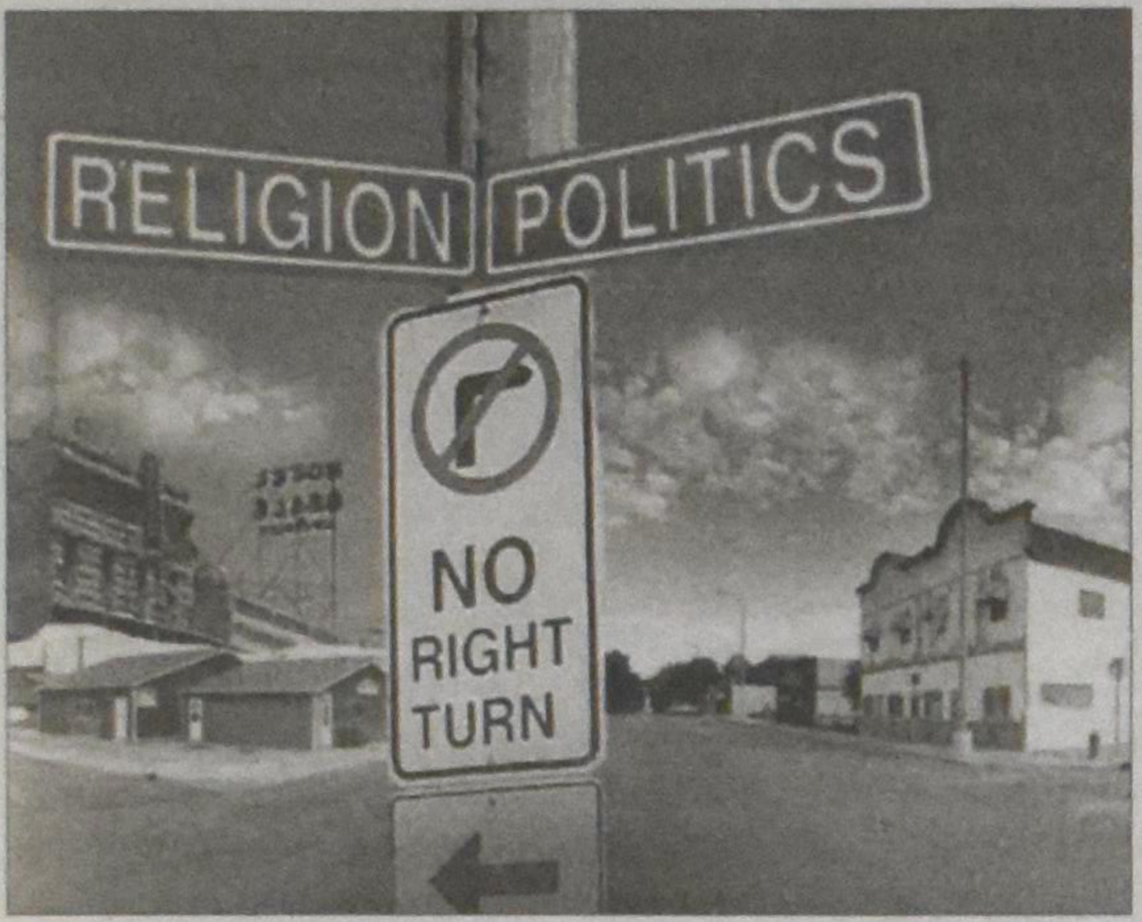
The tricky matter here is that Christianity is *not* merely one religion among the many because it is the only one that bears the name of Christ, that worships the one true God: Father, Son, Spirit. The cause for treading carefully arises because those who do not acknowledge God as the LORD are quite unwilling to admit (barring the working of the Spirit to turn them around) that some other self-chosen god is powerless to help or save them in the face of the God of the cosmos.

It should be clear I'm not calling for a seamless melding of church and state that forces Christianity on citizens in what one might call "Constantine Revisited." Not surprisingly the Manifesto warns against a coercively Christian environment (which would be no "Christian" environment at all; the only irresistible force is the Spirit, in whose wake there are no immovable objects; but that is a Calvinist interpretation of Scripture that most evangelicals disagree with). The Manifesto also warns about the "religious extremism ... typified by Islamist violence." Interestingly, it has very little to say about that serious and dangerous worldwide problem, perhaps because (I'll be charitable here) Islamist terrorists aren't evangelicals and so the subject isn't relevant.

Waving one last red flag the Manifesto warns of the danger of a "two-tier[ed] global public square, one in which the top tier is for cosmopolitan secular liberals and the second tier is for local religious believers." Such an arrangement, it says, would be patronizing, as well as restrictive of religious liberty and justice, and "unworthy of genuine liberalism." What genuine liberalism is the Manifesto does not define.

Clarity, civility, respect

The Manifesto ends with an invitation to all, speaking first to other evangelicals. It urges them to join in clarifying the "profound confusions surrounding Evangelicalism."



Such clarity would result, the writers say, in being more faithful to the Lord and distinctive in following him. I doubt that *will be* the result because the authors did not clear up all the confusion they believe they did.

Secondly, there's an invitation to fellow citizens to assess the damaging consequences of the present divisive "culture wars" in the U.S. The authors would like others to work with them to restore liberty (whose, and what kind?) and civility in public life, which restoration they presume will follow our descendants into future generations (a large assumption unless many, many people in this and future generations become followers of Christ).

Thirdly, the authors want adherents of other faiths to "understand that we respect your right to believe what you believe according to the dictates of your conscience." Those adherents are invited to "follow the golden rule and extend the same rights and respect to us and to the adherents of all other faiths" so that religious persecution becomes rare.

I do not deny the blessings God bestows on all humanity in his common grace, and the Spirit blows where it wills, but what the Manifesto authors are missing here is that, apart from the Spirit's work, it is impossible for adherents to religions that do not follow God's great law of love (love *him* above all and our neighbors as ourselves) to do what the authors "invite" them to do. Nor will persecution become rare; at least not for committed followers of Christ. We *will* suffer, Jesus told us – at the hands of those who follow others gods (be they secular or otherwise). But we should count it joy to suffer for the Name, say both Jesus and Paul. And we will be rewarded; we cannot fathom the glories he will have prepared for us.

Lastly, the Manifesto urges those who report and analyze public affairs – scholars, journalists, public policy makers – to abandon their stereotypes and adopt terms that are accurate and fair "and with a tone that you, in turn, would like to be applied to yourselves."

Bloggers find shortcomings

The reactions to the Manifesto that I discovered at various websites were mostly negative. I could not find reactions, however, from any churches that might have perused the document and used its study guide to initiate discussion. Several online writers felt the Manifesto authors are embarrassed that in the public perception (their fellow academics, the press, etc.), fundamentalist and evangelical Christians are not distinguishable. Some critics felt that that was more an issue of ego than anything else. Not having met any of the Manifesto authors except Mouw, I can't judge that. But the embarrassment issue seems plausible.

A blogger named Denny Burk pointed out that the Manifesto calls for "an expansion of our concern beyond single-issue politics, such as abortion and marriage." "The blanket dismissal of 'single-issue politics' is what concerns me," Burk wrote. "Yes, the Manifesto says that 'we cannot back away from our biblically rooted commitment to the sanctity of every human life, . . . nor can we deny the holiness of marriage as instituted by God between one man and one woman.' But the document also seeks to raise other 'public square' issues as if they have the same moral urgency as abortion and marriage." Burk continued, "I for one am unwilling to tell evangelicals that they should treat the Kyoto Protocols with the same moral urgency with which we address the abortion issue – especially when it comes to evangelical engagement in electoral politics. Abortion and marriage are transcendent moral issues, and evangelicals should treat them as such."

Another blogger, Joe Carter, observed (accurately, I think), "...The elite media simply has no interest in evangelicals except for our political influence. The reason they don't see us as a theological movement is because in their minds 'theology' isn't even a real category. For them to speak of theology is akin to talking about fairies and goblins and other such nonsense."

A mildly humorous summary critique by a person known online as "ptiv" may make you want to read the Manifesto. Or not!

"I find it all slippery nuance and not blunt at all. A blunter statement would be something like [Wheaton College professor] Dr. Jacobs has suggested – 'Hey, we evangelicals aren't actually affiliated with neo-cons or Republicans. We're not allergic to science and we're not anti-intellectual and cornball, either. We actually even read books that aren't by Christians sometimes.' ... This Manifesto is wide open for interpretation. So those of us who might have wanted a more concise series of Luther-ish theses are left kind of bored and disappointed."

Marian Van Til worked for Christian Courier *from 1984-2000, and preceded Harry der Nederlanden as its editor. She lives in Youngstown, NY. She may be contacted by email at: mvantil@roadrunner.com or via her website: www.wordpowerpublishing.com*

Iranian Court finds way to acquit Christians of 'Apostasy'

LOS ANGELES (Compass Direct News) – An Iranian judge has ordered the release of two pastors charged with "apostasy," or leaving Islam, but the defendants said the ruling was based on the court's false claim that they confessed to having never converted to Christianity.

Mahmoud Matin Azad, 52, said he and Arash Basirat, 44, never denied their Christian faith and believe the court statement resulted from the judge seeking a face-saving solution to avoid convicting them of apostasy, which soon could automatically carry the death penalty.

Azad and Basirat were arrested May 15 and acquitted on Sept. 25 by Branch 5 of the Fars Criminal Court in Shiraz, 600 kilometers (373 miles) south of Tehran.

A court document obtained by human rights organization Amnesty International stated, "Both had denied that they had converted to Christianity and said that they remain Muslim, and accordingly the court found no further evidence to the contrary."

Azad vehemently denied the official court statement, saying the notion of him being a Muslim never even came up during the trial.

"The first question that they asked me was, 'What are you doing?' I said, 'I am a pastor pastoring a house church in Iran,'" he told Compass. "All my [court] papers are about Christianity – about my activity, about our church and everything."

Members of Azad's house church confirmed that the government's court statement of his rejection of Christianity was false.

"His faith wasn't a secret – he was a believer for a long, long time," said a source who preferred to remain anonymous.

During one court hearing, Azad said, a prosecutor asked him, "Did you change your religion?" Azad responded, "I didn't have religion for 43 years. Now I have religion, I have faith in God and I am following God."

If the court misstated that the two men said they were Muslims, it likely came from political pressure from above, said Joseph Grieboski, founder of the Institute on Religion and Public Policy.

"If the court did in fact lie about what he said, I would think it's part of the larger political game that [President Mahmoud] Ahmadinejad and his factions are trying to play to garner political support for him," Grieboski said.

Ahmadinejad, who is facing re-election, has approval ratings hovering above the single digits and has faced international criticism for the apostasy law.

"What he does not need is bad press and bad political positioning," Grieboski said. "I would be shocked if [the acquittal] were not somehow involved in the presidential campaign."

International condemnation of the law and of the proposed mandatory death penalty for those who leave Islam comes as Iran faces new rounds of U.N. economic sanctions for uranium enrichment.

Upon his release, Azad said that no reason was given for the court freeing him and Basirat. Disputing the court's allegation that they claimed to be Muslims, Azad said that he told his attorney, "Two things I will never say. First, I will not lie; second, I will not deny Jesus my Lord and my Savior."

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South Africa

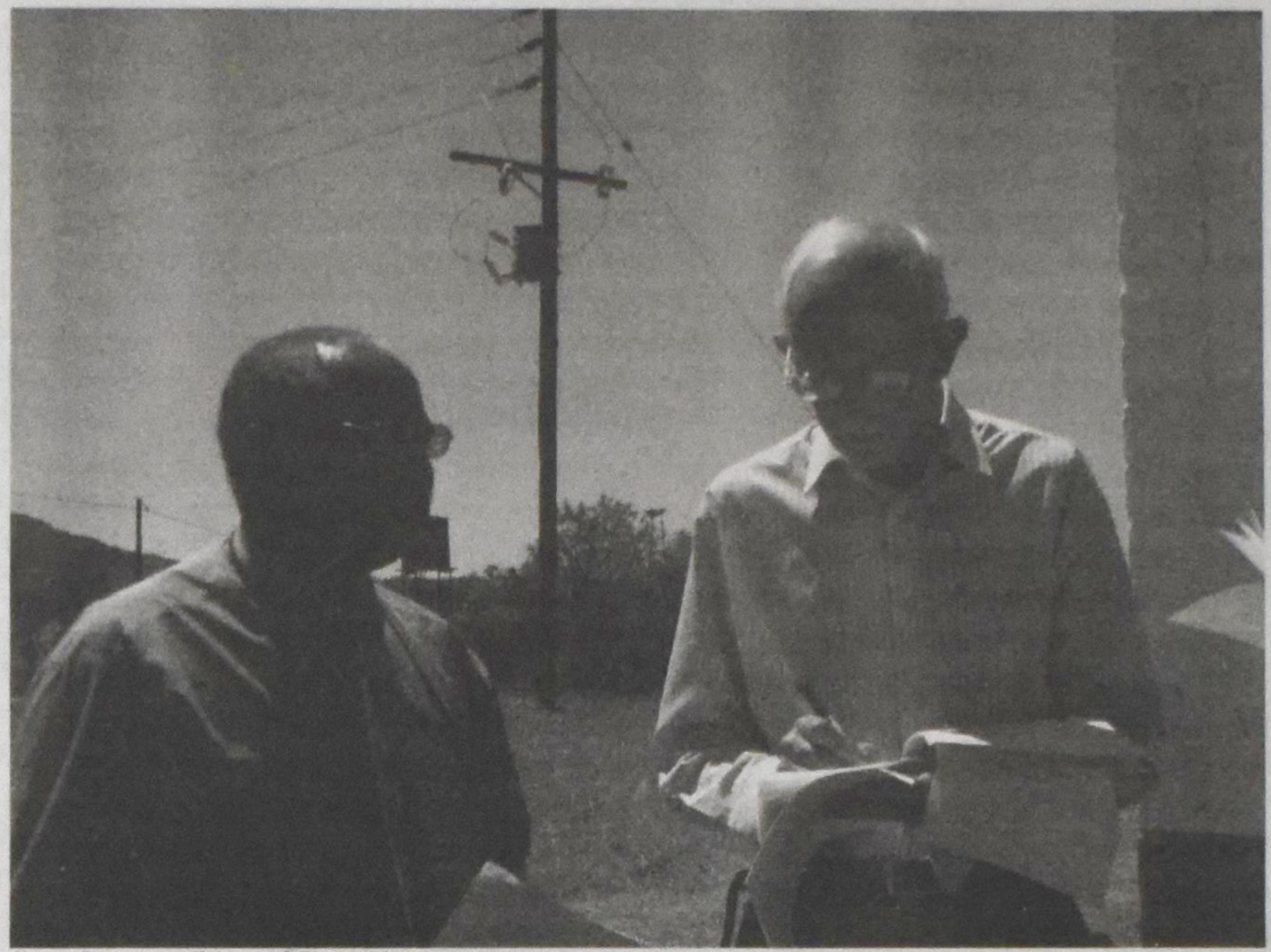
A very historic classis meeting

Dora Stroobosscher

Limpopo Province, South Africa – De-hoop is a black village in the most Northern Province of Limpopo deep in the heart of rural South Africa. In between traditional rondavels, cement, and brick homes, stands a small church. It is a simple plastered cement structure, but has an impressive steeple, with a working bell in its tower. The rope is long gone, but a long, thin stick attached to the bell works just as well. Twice each Sunday morning, at 8:30 and again at 10:00, its clear tones call out to the villagers to come and worship.

The church is an old building, and shows signs of weakness, but, more importantly, it is a historic building. A cornerstone beside the front entrance tells me that it was erected in 1945, and its present pastor, Pastor Norman N. Ligege fills in the rest of the story. The first mission church was in Siloam, across the Soutspansberg mountain range, about 80km north of De-hoop. De-hoop was chosen as the location for the second mission church to be erected in the Limpopo area.

A white missionary pastor served the area around De-hoop, and when a black pastor was ordained in 1961, they continued to minister to the needs of the people together. This arrangement continued until the year 2000 when the last white missionary pastor retired.



Rev. Ligege (l.) and Rev. Kruger in conversation.

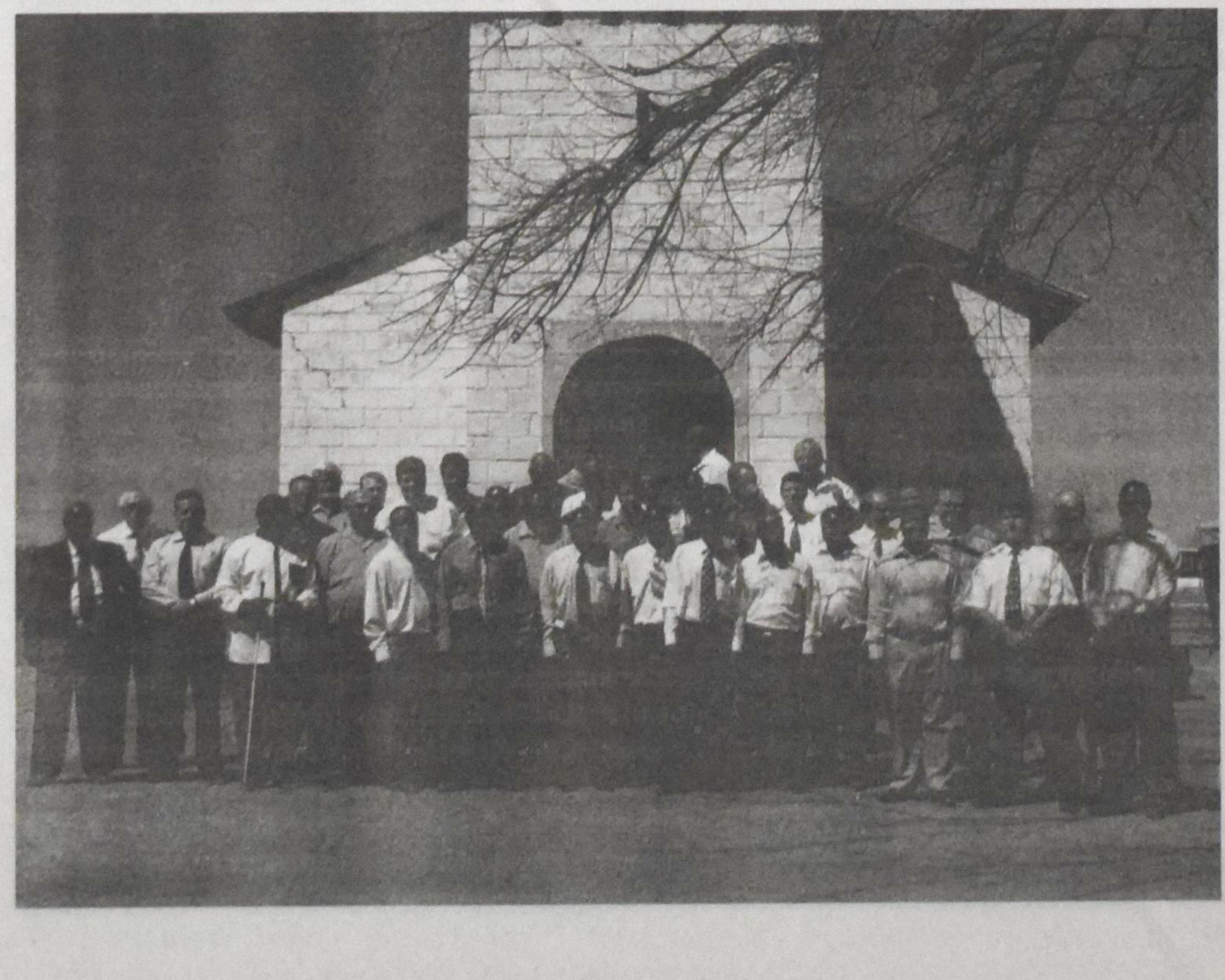
Excitement and pride

During the second week of September, 2008 the members of De-hoop and also those of the surrounding villages began to prepare for a big event which was to take place at the church. The men repaired broken windows, and the women hauled soil to beautify the grounds. Sparkling white curtains were hung and, by using metre upon metre of colourful fabrics, the interior of the church was transformed into an elegant banquet centre. A large refreshment tent was set up and a small army of women began to plan and prepare food. A sense of pride and excitement filled the air! By 8:30 a.m., Tuesday, September 16, everything was ready and the "guests" began to arrive.

Over 40 black and white delegates, coming from as far away as the borders of Mozambique and Zimbabwe, made their way along a narrow dirt road and over a flooded bridge in order to attend the third meeting of Classis Limpopo of the Reformed Church of South Africa (GKSA). It was not the first time that this racially mixed classis had met together, but it was the first time that they had chosen to meet together in a rural black Venda village. It was indeed a historic event, taking place in a very historic building.

Post-Apartheid reality

Pastor N.N Ligege opened the meeting with these words. "There are many blacks and whites who did not live to see this day. I am so thankful that I am alive to see this happen." Already in 2003, the National Synod of the Reformed Churches of South Africa (GKSA) had voted to do away with barriers based on colour – local churches, classis, and regional synods were to be re-structured to reflect geography, not colour or language.



Although the National Synod made a declaration, it took a while before local classes were able to wholeheartedly adopt the new reality of South Africa. Even though that was a historic vote, in reality, churches still tended to continue to meet more or less on a linguistic basis – Venda, Nguni, Sotho, Shangaan and Afrikaans. However, all these churches did extend a true hand of Christian fellowship to anyone who chose to worship in their midst. Classis Limpopo of the GKSA, a new classis formed by the joining of a white and black classis, met together as black and white churches for the first time in 2007 in Pietersburg (Polokwana), a large city in central Limpopo. In the spring of 2008, it had gathered at a white Afrikaans speaking church located in Louis Trichardt, a bustling town in the North West area of Limpopo. Now, in the fall of 2008, the delegates had come to the De-hoop.

Stories of dispair and hope

After an opening devotion based on Luke 19:18-27, the delegates went to work. They elected an executive, and dealt with such issues as proper songs to be used during worship services in Reformed Churches, the importance of regular preaching of the Heidelberg Catechism, declining attendance at the second service and organizing local conferences for deacons and youth. All this was done in a comfortable mix of the Afrikaans and English languages. Delegates listened with interest to reports from the Reformed Churches in Zambia and Zimbabwe, especially Zimbabwe because the people there face incredible hardship.

During the lunch break I spoke to Pastor P. Muzenda and Phidian Mazarire. They both work at a Christian school in Zimbabwe with about 230 students. 170 of these students are AIDS orphans. Pastor Muzenda's family of seven has learned to survive up to three weeks without any substantial food. Phidian lamented the fact that he was unable to properly care for his aging father.

In spite of this, both men shared their story faith in a providential and faithful God, a faith that allows them to be hopeful about the future of their country.

The biggest challenge facing this Classis is the ongoing problems which have come about as a result of a separation between Reformed Churches which before 2003 belonged to one classis. Some churches embraced the new interracial structure of the National Synod. Others withdrew and formed an all-black Synod of their own. The wounds created by this separation are still very painful even five years later. Quarrels over ownership and use of some church buildings and accusations cause much hurt in the hearts of those involved.

Classis was requested to investigate all aspects of this division and to give guidance as to how these churches could continue to relate to each other in a Christ-like manner in spite of their differences.

The songs chosen were also a mix of Reformed hymns in Afrikaans and traditional Venda songs. One of these choruses, sung in Venda, summarized the hope and desire of all the delegates who attended this classis meeting:

Bvisa zwire mbiluni yanga x3
Zwi nthivhela u rabel.

The English translation is:

Remove all the stumbling blocks, x3
They prevent us from praying.

All over the world, we could all use such advice and prayer.

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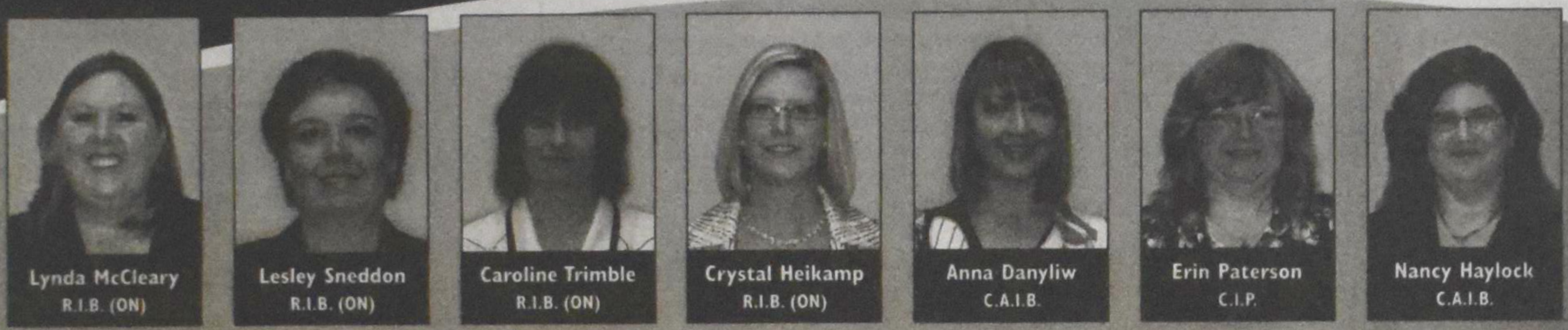

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Spot color – yellow

The spot color choice on the last issue was very difficult to read and I am very sorry about my mistake. The challenge for your eyes was not intended.

The color numbered 293 was picked but instead 393 was written for the printer. The color for this issue is 293, the one that was meant for the last issue.

Rose der Nederlanden

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Classifieds

Marriage

Meindert van der Galiên and **Helen Mae Waite**

wish to announce their marriage, which took place on Sept. 20, 2008
at their cottage on Colton Lake, Ontario
witnessed by family, friends and neighbours.
The outdoor ceremony was officiated by Rev. David Tigchelaar.

Mae, an R.N. for the past 36 years, was very pleased so many of her nursing friends could attend.

Home address: 2196 Foy Rd RR 2, Renfrew ON K7V 3Z5

Obituaries

DIANE OUDYK (nee **FLIM**)

Hellendoorn, Holland January 10, 1930.....Oshawa, Ontario October 10, 2008
Peacefully at Thorntonview Nursing Home, Oshawa, Ont. on Friday, October 10, 2008

God took home in her 79th year his worn-out child Diane, after more than four decades of suffering. Diane was the dearly beloved sister and sister-in-law of: Alice & Ike Dykstra, Orono, Ont., Flora & Henk Flim of Oshawa, Ont., Berta & Albert Hosmar of Whitby, Ont., Jenny & Cameron Linnell of Woodstock, Ont., Fred Wind of Whitby, Ont. and Anne Flim of Lethbridge, Alta. Predeceased by brothers Herman and George Flim and sister Joanne Wind.

Diane spent the last three decades of her life at Thorntonview Nursing Home, and we can never thank the staff enough for the care, love and respect they surrounded her with.
The funeral and memorial service took place at Mount Lawn Reception centre, Whitby, Ontario. Pastor Bernie Bakker officiated.

For you, Diane: *When you feel bewildered, deserted, depressed and alone,*
When you feel that God frowned and forsook you,
When you fear for the future, when all hopes are gone,
And when you're afraid that no one really needs you....
Then know that for you there's awaiting a crown,
which was prepared for you at creation.
And that angels have fashioned a shining white gown,
and that for you there'll be joy and salvation.
All your tears have been gathered, and are then washed away.
All your fears will have vanished forever.
And you'll know why below was so bitter your way,
And you'll rejoice, and have peace then forever.
Now she has peace forevermore.

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GEORGE (Geert) GEERTS

What a day that will be
When my Saviour I shall see
When he takes me by the hand
And leads me to the Promised Land

That day was October 31, 2008

The memorial service was held on November 5, 2008.
It is good to praise the Lord,
and make music to your name O Most High. Psalm 92:1

Beloved husband of Grace Geerts (Meester)
Pre-deceased by Nelligyen Geerts (de Jong) 1991
Dearly loved father of:
Herman and Margaret Geerts, *Ancaster ON*
Bill and Dini Geerts, *Chilliwack, BC*
Nancy and Vic Vandermolen, *St. Thomas, ON*
John and Linda Geerts, *Hamilton, ON*
Corry and Richard Kloet, *Cambridge, ON*
Much loved step-father of:
Teresa and Bob Busch, *Ancaster ON*
Theo and Alma Meester, *Beamsville ON*
Harry and Hessie Meester, *Hamilton ON*
Devoted Pake & Grandpa of numerous grandchildren and great-grandchildren, and of 3 great-great-grandchildren.

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Apology

See spot color explanation on page 19

Personal

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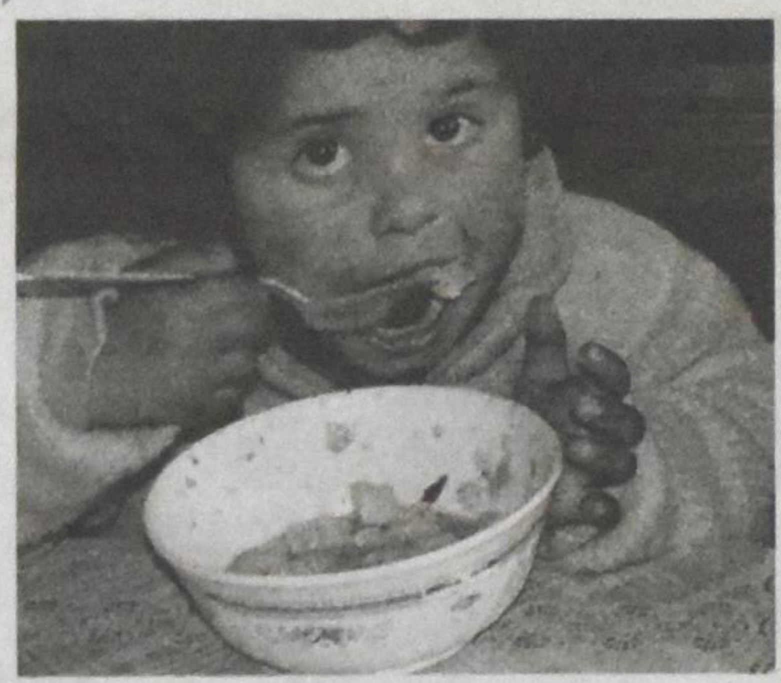

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Job description and church profile are available by contacting
Elaine van Wyngaarden (search Committee chair) at
519-756-8524 (email: dealk@rogers.com)
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To obtain a copy of the church profile, the position mandate and further information, please contact our search committee c/o:
Peter Herfst at mpherfst@rogers.com.
Or write him at P. Herfst 42 Wilkins Dr. Kitchener On N2E 1L2

Application deadline will be January 31, 2009. It is our hope to fill this position by summer, 2009.

Willowdale Christian School (WCS), is an elementary school offering grades JK – 8 and is located in North York.
We are currently seeking applications for a

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WCS is located in one of the most diverse cities in Ontario, and this is reflected in our school community. We are a multi denominational school. WCS strives to provide our 140 students with a high standard of education that nurtures and develops each student through Christ centered programs in partnership with Christian families. WCS is currently in Year One of our Strategic Plan, and the successful applicant will partner with WCS as we move onto Year Two.

The successful candidate will use his/her Christian Leadership skills to encourage and develop staff and students. They will share their vision for Christian education with the community and encourage it to grow and develop both spiritually and educationally. They will possess both experience in education and management as demonstrated through a Christian School Principal Certificate (CSPC) or equivalent, as well as a Bachelor of Business Administration or equivalent management experience.

Information about WCS is available at **www.willowdalechristianschool.org**

Closing date for applications is November 15, 2008.
Inquiries / requests for further information and letters of application accompanied by a resume should be directed to: **wcsprincipalsearch@sympatico.ca.**

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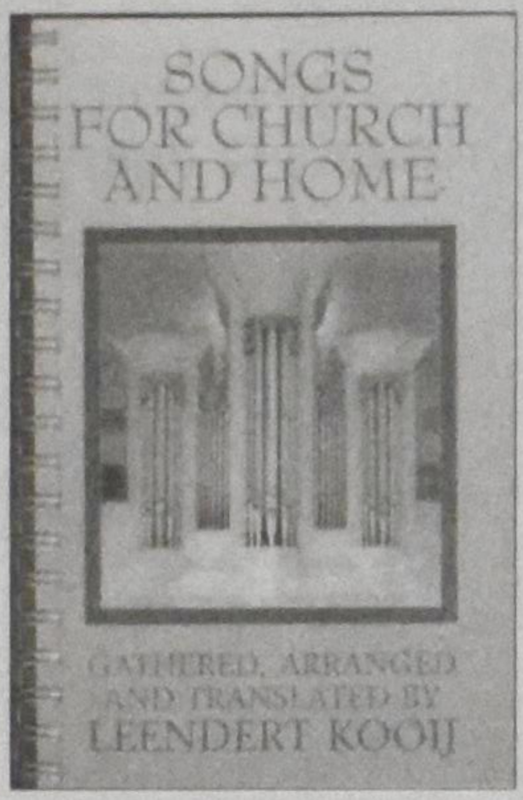

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Sociology/Criminal Justice – teach undergraduate courses, both introductory, advanced, and special topics

To learn more about a position and receive application materials, qualified persons committed to a Reformed, biblical perspective and educational philosophy are encouraged to e-mail a letter of interest and curriculum vita/resume to:

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Sioux Center IA 51250-1697
Web site: www.dordt.edu/offices/academic_affairs
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Administrative Staff Contact: Susan Droog, Human Resources
Email: hr@dordt.edu FAX: (712) 722-6035
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Events/Advertising

CALENDAR OF EVENTS - 2008

Nov 8 The Lighthouse Fundraising Dinner and Silent Auction, 377 Woodbridge Ave.,**Woodbridge,** ON. Doors open at 5:30 Dinner 6:15 RSVP Janet 416-535-6262 or janet@lighthousecentre.ca

Nov 8 Trillium League Reunion (Ontario) If you were involved in Trillium League Youth during the years of 1975 and 1982, you are invited to reminisce & reconnect from 4-9 p.m. at Community CRC in **Kitchener**. For details go to www.trilliumleaguereunion.com or email Phia (Hoogendoorn) Howes at phia@sympatico.ca or call 519-699-5942.

Nov 14-16 Reformed Marriage Encounter weekend in **Peterborough**. For more information or to register on-line, go to www.reformedme.org or contact Chris & Cindy Otten at 519-393-5163 or by email at Ontario_registration@reformedme.org.

Nov 18 Noon-hour Organ Recital, Jonathan Oldengarm, at St. Paul's Anglican Cathedral, Richmond Street at Dundas Street, **London**, ON. Free admission. Program will feature works by Karg-Elert, Harwood and Duruflé. For more information call: 519-434-3225.

Nov 19 Festive Concert, OCMA Come back. Choir – Organ – Panflute – Trumpet – Vocal Quartet & Audience. 7:30 p.m. Admission Adults: $20.00 under 12: $10.00 Georgetown CRC, 11611 Trafalger Rd., **Georgetown** ON. Phone OCMA at 416-636-9779

Nov 21 Organ Concert, Jonathan Oldengarm, organist, at 7:30 PM. Hebron Christian Reformed Church, 4240 Anderson Street, **Whitby**, ON. Tickets are $10.00 at the door. For more information call: 905-668-0040

Nov 22 Festive Concert, OCMA Come back. Choir 7:30 p.m. – Organ – Panflute –Trumpet – Vocal Quartet & Audience. Admission Adults: $20.00 under 12: $10.00. Springdale CRC, 1466 5th Sideroad, **Bradford** ON Phone OCMA at 416-636-9779

Nov 23 Dutch Service will be held in the **Ancaster** Christian Reformed Church at 3:00 p.m. Rev. Harry VanderWindt will be preaching.

Dec 7 Dutch Christmas Carol service at Emmanuel Reformed Church, 170 Clarke St. **Woodstock** at 7:00 p.m. Rev. Henry DeBolster giving the message, Choir singing Babysitting available, Refreshments provided after the service.

Dec 7 St. Lukes Annual Christmas Concert 3:00 p.m. We will feature 25 members of the Liberation Choir in this annual event at St. Lukes Anglican Church, 1382 Ontario St, **Burlington**, ON.

Dec 13 The Liberation Choir will lead the 5th Annual Christmas Sing-a-long Concert, 7 p.m. at Rehoboth Christian Reformed Church in Bowmanville,130 Scugog Rd, **Bowmanville**. ON

Dec 17 The Ambassadors Christian Male Chorus and The Ladies Advent Singers will render a concert of praise to Christ the King at 8:00 p.m. in Mt. **Hamilton** Christian Reformed Church. 1411 Upper Wellington Street. Freewill offering.

Dec 19 The Ambassadors and Ladies Advent Singers are guests at The Holland Christian Homes annual participating Christmas concert at 7:30 p.m. Offering for HCH's broadcast ministries.

Dec 20 The Liberation Choir 5th Annual Christmas Sing-a-long Concert with the Steeltown Orchestra. at 7 p.m. at St. Giles United Church, Main St E & 85 Holton Ave S, **Hamilton**.

Dec 21 Liberation Choir Georgetown / Salvation Army Christmas fundraiser Charity Concert 7 pm, Georgetown Christian Reformed Church1161 Trafalgar Road, **Georgetown**, ON

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For more information contact Dianne De Wit at 712-722-6029 or ddewit@dordt.edu

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News

Multi-cultural celebration of center for refugees

Rob Datema

This September the Lighthouse Community Centre had a celebration to observe 40 years of ministry. Forty years of reaching out to people from diverse communities and different cultures.

In 1968, The Lighthouse started as a Vacation Bible School ministry of Toronto First Christian Reformed Church in the Bloor and Bathurst Streets area. Those first ten years, boys and girls from the community came to the Centre, to learn about the love of Jesus. Peter, someone who still lives in the community, has fond memories of when as a young boy he visited the Lighthouse known as the Christian Reformed Inner City Ministry. He remembers the love shown by Pastor Ken Verhulst and the students who came to help lead summer camps.

Focus on refugees

In 1980, The Lighthouse changed its focus. Under the direction of Dirk Jongkind, the ministry began to help refugees known as "the boat people." Food and clothing were sent to refugee camps, and churches began sponsoring refugees with the help of the Lighthouse. These refugees had many needs, and Rita Wong was hired to help them to better settle into their life in Canada. Rita later began working with the Chinese Community where she continues her work today.

In 1983, a group of people formed a Bible study group, which became known as All Nations Christian Fellowship. Today, they meet at the Lighthouse on Sunday. Many in their church have ties to The Lighthouse as former refugees

Many different faces

In 1988, Samia Saad joined the staff to work with the influx of people from Spanish background. Samia dealt with sponsorship and with many of the injustices the refugees and newcomers face. She continues to work with the Latin American community who are trying to gain status in Canada.

In 1998, Thuy Tran was hired to meet the needs of the Vietnamese Community. Thuy provides counselling and support groups in this community. She also leads Bible studies at West Detention Centre.

Over the years, the food bank evolved. It started out as an emergency food bank for many of the refugees who needed help. Today, with the help of churches, Daily Food Bread, Second Harvest and individuals, we feed about 100 people each week and offer a listening ear and advocacy to many.

Many lives

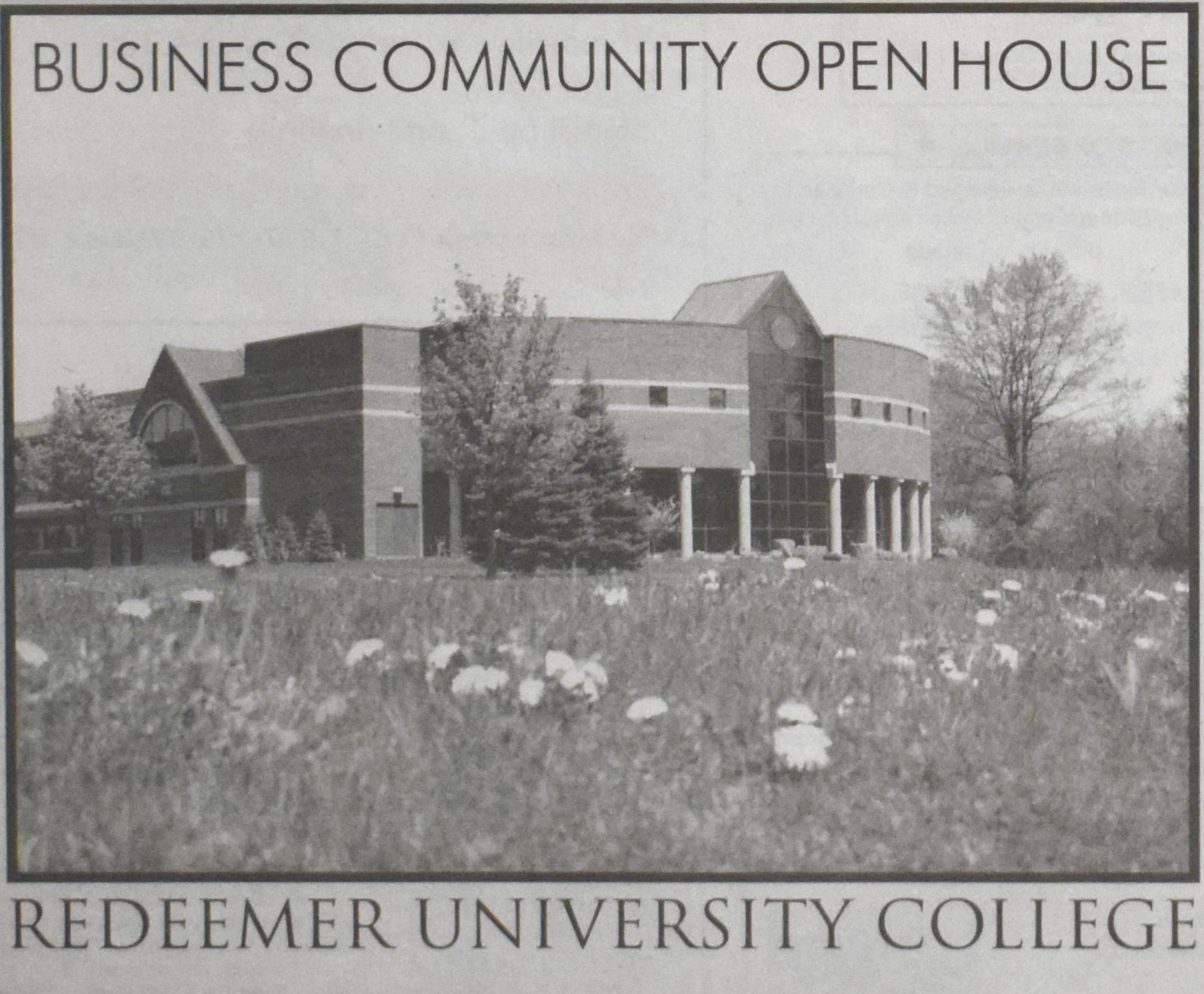
Looking back over 40 years, we notice that the Lighthouse touched the lives of many people. As part of the celebration, the Chinese ESL classes sang a couple of songs in Chinese and one gentleman played the instrument called "Wee-wu." The Vietnamese Community had someone share how the Lighthouse helped her. The Hispanic Seniors group sang a song in Spanish and in English and a recent Hispanic newcomer sang a song in Spanish.

The evening was a wonderful display of the multicultural dynamics at the Lighthouse. Many who attended the celebration stated that they didn't know the Lighthouse did so much. Everyone enjoyed themselves listening to music and songs in different languages as well as filling up on all the food provided!

As we reflect on the past 40 years, we recognize how the Lord has blessed each one who participates at the Lighthouse. Whether a participant, a volunteer, a staff person or a supporter, the Lord has used them in extraordinary ways. Now we look forward to seeing how the Lord will bless the Lighthouse in the future.

We know the Lord works in mysterious ways and we pray that the Lord will use this ministry of the Christian Reformed Church to touch the lives of many who walk through the doors.

Rob Datema (rob@lighthousecentre.ca) is the executive director of The Lighthouse Christian Community Centre in Toronto, Ontario.



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